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WOMEN,

OR

CHRONICLES OF THE LATE WAR.

BY

MARY TUCKER MAGILL.

"The mission of woman on earth: to give birth
To the mercy of Heaven descending on earth.
The mission of woman: permitted to bruise
The head of the serpent, and sweetly infuse,
Through the sorrow and sin of earth's registered curse,
The blessing which mitigates all; born to nurse
And to soothe and to solace, to help and to heal
The sick world that leans on her."

OWEN MEREDITH.

BALTIMORE:
TURNBULL BROTHERS.
1871.

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Dedication.

To the Women of the South!

is this volume

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

For it is to their sympathy and confirmation, that the author looks in the narration of this little story. If they recognise in it any kinship to their own experience; if it stir their hearts tenderly for the dead past, and nerve them for the living present, one great object in her labors will have been attained.

THE AUTHOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

A TRUE artist, before he touches his canvas, paints upon the retina of his mind's eye a perfect representation of the scene he wishes to portray with the skilful pencil of his fancy here deepening a shade and there developing an expression, until he sees it the perfect embodiment of his idea; nor does he rest satisfied until the glowing canvas presents a reflection of this, its original.

A true orator, whose office it is to deal with the passions of the multitude, to sway and control them at his will by his use of language gesture and eye, before he can accomplish his end must bear upon his own heart the impress of the feeling he describes. Language the most beautiful falls powerless unless the heart be in it, while the most thrilling eloquence is the eloquence of deep feeling.

The author combines these two arts, merges them into one. He too paints his scenes upon the retina of his mind's eye and reflects them in language. He too is obliged to bear upon his heart the impress of the feeling he would describe, and that also with a vividness and power equal to if not exceeding that which he would excite; and so it must be that the author suffers keenly in portraying human passion and suffering, because he must in every case make it his own.

This being the case, it cannot be wondered at that the task just accomplished in these pages has been a painful one; and the more so that each incident, if not real, had its counterpart in the author's own experience or that of her friends. It has been the waking of the echoes of old trials, the evoking from the chambers of memory scenes which had just fallen into their first slumber there: the tender smile of recollection, which itself has a tear in it, of old laughter and happiness, not the less intense because they came as the reaction of the heart from anxiety and grief, the summoning from their graves friends dead and gone, and making them live and act once more on the mimic stage of her fancy. Often has her pen faltered and her heart grown faint over her task; but with *nature* as her inspiration and *truth* as her guide, she has persevered to the end. How the work has been accomplished, she leaves it to the judgment of the public to decide — a public which has proved so kind to her in the past that she dares regard it as her friend.

The theme chosen is no uncommon one, perhaps, though in the treatment given, it can scarce be regarded as hackneyed. It is more the fashion to lay the scenes of a war story on the battle-field, in the camp and the toilsome march, to write of deeds dared by those whose province it is to act the more vigorous part in such scenes. But this is a story of WOMAN in her proper sphere, by the fireside, in her household duties, and by the side of the sick and dying. It is a simple, unexaggerated narrative of what non-combatants are forced to endure in a country torn by intestine strife, and for its truth I appeal not only to my own country-women, but to the world; and I hear an echo from the mountains of Switzerland and the fair plains of Italy, while Poland and Greece take up the refrain, and France, baring her breast all gory with recent wounds, cries aloud for a pen of fire with which to write her story.

The title of the book was first suggested by an incident in which the author was an actor. Its narration may not be without interest.

It was in November of 1862, after the bloody battle of Antietam, when the town of Winchester constituted the field-hospital for the army. Every building devoted to such purposes was crowded; the private houses also were filled, and even along the streets the sufferers lay, affording a moving spectacle of the horrors of war.

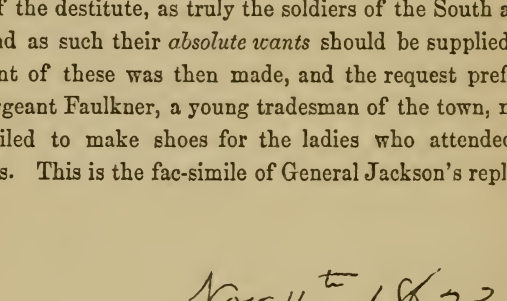
The rapid transitions of the army had rendered it impossible to supply the sick and wounded with such comforts as they needed. A pallet of straw and coarse army fare was the lot of all, no matter what their condition and rank.

In this state of affairs it may be inferred that the ladies of the town were not backward in their efforts to supply, so far as their means allowed, what was lacking; and when their resources were exhausted they still gave their time and services. Night and day found them in attendance on the poor sufferers. They did not hesitate to take the hospitals under their care even, and with all their energies strove to ameliorate the sufferings which met them at every turn.

But an obstacle occurred which threatened to be serious, if not insurmountable. In the decimation of all the callings of trade which the war occasioned, there was not a shoemaker in the town, out of the army, and the ladies were seriously embarrassed by the fact that their shoes were completely worn out, not even affording sufficient protection to enable them to pursue their walks to the hospitals with comfort.

In this emergency it was suggested that if an application were made, it would be an easy matter to have a shoemaker detailed from the ranks who would in a short time remedy the evil.

Acting upon this, the author of these pages, as the representative of her companions, made the application to General Jackson himself, by letter, in which she took the ground that although nature and custom combined to exclude women from a more active participation in scenes of warfare, yet were they, in pursuing their walks among the sick and suffering, in relieving the wants of the destitute, as truly the soldiers of the South as the men, and as such their *absolute wants* should be supplied. A statement of these was then made, and the request preferred that Sergeant Faulkner, a young tradesman of the town, might be detailed to make shoes for the ladies who attended the hospitals. This is the fac-simile of General Jackson's reply:


Nov. 14th, 1812,

My dear Miss Mary

Your application of the 12th inst has been rec'd and be assured that if I had the authority it should be granted. But whilst I have no authority

for making a detail for such purpose. yet if he Sgt Faulkner applies for a leave of absence, and it receives the approval of the intermediate commanders, I will regard it not only as a duty, but it will be a pleasure to grant it. Be assured that I feel a deep & abiding interest in our female Soldier. They are patriots in the truest sense of the word, and I more than admire them. Please give my kindest regard to your dear sister & inimi-

Table mother & believe me
your much attached friend
L. J. Jackson

In writing a story of the "Lost Cause," the author has fully appreciated the delicacy and difficulty of the task. Acknowledging the expediency of "seeking those things which make for peace," she has earnestly desired to avoid the bitterness and recrimination which formed so prominent a feature in the domestic scenes of the war. She has attempted no political view of the subject; she has never once attacked the actions of the Government; she has simply amplified the fact that there are bad men and tyrants in every army, who will not hesitate to use the power intrusted to them for military purposes, merely to serve their own ends or gratify a private grievance, and hence a great deal of the suffering which is inseparable from a state of war.

For the Cause itself she has only to say that History, which seldom espouses the cause of the vanquished, may bring in a verdict of guilty against it, may decide that the sacrifices made and the terrible agonies endured were in the cause of wrong and oppression; but if ever there was pure patriotism, an earnest, honest conviction of right, it nerved the arms and inspired the hearts of the people of the South. And for the women: as a mother clasps in her loving embrace her new-born child, and rejoices in its perfection of life and limb and that it is all her own, so did they love the "Cause" in its new birth; and when the blood began to flow, and they looked upon its fair young face all marred and bleared by its suffering, they but hugged it

the closer to their breasts; and when at last they laid it a dead corpse under the sods of Appomattox, they wept bitter tears over its loss. And still with pious sorrow do they trace out its footsteps through the length and breadth of the land, remembering them of each trait which endeared it to them; laughing and weeping in a breath as recollection brings back its scenes of sorrow and triumph, of joy and humiliation; and through it all, turning aside from a contemplation of secondary causes, they bow beneath the hand which dealt the blow, saying, "It is the Lord: let Him do as seemeth Him good."

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WOMEN,

OR

Chronicles of the Late War.

CHAPTER I.

'This is the place. Stand still, my steed,
Let me review the scene,
And summon from the shadowy past
The forms that once have been."—LONGFELLOW.

NEAR the head of the Valley of Virginia, sharing its rich stores of historic association, shut in by its "everlasting hills," is the town of Winchester. Looking to the northeast and west we see an horizon bounded by what seems to be a continuous range of mountains, the distance sealing up the break which occurs at Harper's Ferry, leaving the gazer wondering how the barrier may be surmounted. So the unbroken outline stretches its serpentine length along, its deep blue hue clearly defined against the lighter color of the sky. But turning to the south the eye encounters a change in the continuity of outline; the mountain range, instead of carrying out its imagined object of enclosing this small garden-spot of cultivated fields, waving groves and smiling villages within its giant embrace, stretches its long arms onward as far as the eye can reach; and like a divorced marriage which in

its union has had but one aim, the embrace and protection of the household hearth, now, instead of meeting, turns aside, separates, and the two waving outlines creep along parallel but never touching, sometimes as though old associations were too strong to be resisted, drawing nearer until even the individual features can be distinguished the one by the other, and then starting away with a sigh which breathes through the trees, and as if by mutual consent the breach is widened and the separation complete, whilst smiling Nature laughs and dances between.

About twenty miles from Winchester the chain on the left-hand side seems by some freak of Nature to have thrown off a portion of ts bulk, forming another and shorter ridge which for its whole distance runs parallel with the other, thus making three mountain ranges and two valleys. The longer of the two, extending almost through the entire length of Virginia, is called the Valley of the Shenandoah, and the other the Scott or Massanutten Valley; and where the two valleys are merged into one by the sudden breaking off of the Massanutten Mountain, for so the short ridge is called, the two villages of Front Royal and Strasburg are built, about six miles apart, and the Shenandoah river winds like a silver thread far away until it is lost in the misty distance.

Nothing can exceed the beauty and fertility of this most favored region. It might be the "Happy Valley" of Rasselas, with everything to charm the senses and lull into peace and contentment the dweller upon its soil. But alas! how at war with its appearance have been its experiences, for ever since the first settlement of the State, has the Valley of Virginia taken a prominent

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place in its stirring and bloody scenes. It was in these mountains that the dispossessed tribes of Indians found their last refuge on the soil of Virginia, and old men will now tell you of scenes of horror handed down one generation, of the terror of the war-whoop and the fearful revenge of the savage upon women and children. And later, if those mountains, those hoary witnesses of the changes wrought by time could speak, they would tell how many a hunted soldier of the Revolution sought safety and shelter amongst its recesses; and history points out one spot so walled in by these bulwarks of Nature, that General Washington is said to have marked it out as the last retreat for the army of the dying republic should victory quite desert his standard, and here like Leonidas of old would he lead the "forlorn hope," and if they might no longer fight for their country's freedom they might here find heroes' graves, and the immortal spot descend in the pages of history side by side with the Thermopylæ of the Greeks.

But we have unconsciously wandered far away from the place from whence we started, which is of more immediate interest to us.

Winchester, resting so peacefully in the hollow at the base of her seven hills, the brows of which are dotted with dwellings surrounded by their old forest trees, while here and there a Lombardy poplar rears its giant height with ungraceful stiffness, valued not for its beauty but from the power of old association, which makes so many objects destitute of either grace or beauty so dear to our hearts.

Coming up the valley from the south, at the entrance of the town we are met by a curious old "foot-print in the sands of time" in the shape of an Indian legend.

It is connected with a beautiful spring gushing out of the limestone rock which still bears the name of "Shawnee Spring;" and we are told how the old warriors of the Shawnee tribe used here to bow their plumed heads to drink of its cool waters, imbibing with each draught a firmer belief in the legend of their tribe, that whoever quenched his thirst thus and there, although fate might lead him many a mile away from the familiar spot, here he would return to die, the arrow of the red man and the powder of the white, being alike powerless to sap away the life which could only be rendered up within reach of its charmed waters. And we can imagine the poor dispossessed sovereign of the soil, wounded and footsore, dragging his weary length towards this Mecca of his pilgrimage, and when at last the gushing stream meets his failing eye he lays him down to die with the rippling of the waters as his only requiem.

The only other object of especial interest to the collector of these autographs of time, to which we will point, is the site of old Fort Loudoun, which was built, so history informs us, after Braddock's defeat; Colonel George Washington retiring to this spot, and not only choosing the situation as suitable to his purpose, but himself purchasing the lot and superintending the building, even bringing his own blacksmith from Mount Vernon to do what came within his line of business.

The fort has long ago crumbled away, but you are still pointed to the well which supplied the wants of the garrison, and the rugged abutments which are all that remain of the fortifications thrown up by the soldiers themselves. The main street of the town now passes through what was once the centre of the fort, and sub-

stantial looking dwellings, covering the site, obliterate all traces of the more warlike buildings of long ago.

Our story opens in the spring of the year 1861, at the beginning of the four years' struggle, between the two sections of our country, which ended so disastrously for the Southern States, and whose effects are still so sadly felt through the whole country.

On the 12th of April, 1861, was the first gun of the war fired at Charleston; and its echoes, instead of dying away, reverberated through the length and breadth of the land, awakening a menacing note of defiance which, like muttering thunder, now low, then louder and louder, rolled through the ominous clouds which overshadowed our political horizon, portending a storm of extraordinary violence; indications hailed by some with reckless triumph and by others with sad forebodings, who with prophetic eye viewed the long vista of horrors which the fierce hurricane would launch upon our devoted heads. Everywhere the busy note of preparation was heard. The ploughshare was exchanged for the sword and the pruning-hook for the spear. Even the women took their part, and the busy needle was plied in preparing garments for the new-made soldiers; delicate hands fingered the coarse yarn, and the untutored fingers, taught by earnestness of purpose, fashioned the rough sock which was to be worn away in long, tedious marches.

But those were the holiday times of the war. Not a drop of blood had been shed; and who ever realises an evil without experience as a guide? There is something exhilarating in the bravery which will dare a great danger; and hot blood, surging in youthful veins, brought thousands from luxurious homes, joyful volunteers in the battle for right.

Poor boys! What could they know of the trials before them, the exposure of the camp, the toilsome march, the fever which too often sapped away life before an enemy was seen, and the horrors of the battle-field? With their ardent gaze they saw but the path of glory strewn with immortelles, and forgot that "the paths of glory lead but to the grave." "Hope told a flattering tale," and was heard by credulous ears. And the women waved them on to the conflict, shedding their brightest smiles and cheering them to victory with their syren voices; and so they went dancing to their death, to the music of the murderous cannon and the crackling musketry.

LETTER FROM MISS ELLEN RANDOLPH TO HER COUSIN, MRS. MURRAY.

WINCHESTER, June 1st, 1861.

MY DEAR MARGIE,—I feel very much ashamed when I think how long your letter has been unanswered, particularly when I consider that you have been in trouble; but the fact is, we live in such a state of excitement that I neglect all of my duties. You would not know old Winchester if you could see it now. Our quiet, humdrum lives are at an end, and we hardly recognise ourselves in the change. No one has time for anything; it is soldiers, soldiers from morning to night. Old Mrs. Brown (you remember her) announced to me the other day that her house being small she could only *sleep* eight, but she *ate thirty* at each meal! Just imagine what cannibalism, and we are as bad, for the house is full of them all the time; and every minute is spent either sewing for soldiers, knitting for soldiers, nursing sick soldiers, talking to soldiers, singing to

soldiers, and — shall I confess it? — *thinking* of soldiers. If this were all of war I would think it delightful; but unfortunately I cannot quite forget that the time must come before long when these dear boys will go to more serious work.

We enjoy having Mary with us so much. She is so bright and joyous, and the greatest belle you ever saw. Half of the Confederate army stationed at this point are thinking as much of the darts from her eyes as of any strokes from the Yankees. She certainly does have a nice time. She rides with the cavalry, drives with the artillery, and walks with the infantry, and I must confess it, flirts equally with all.

Now, my circumspect cousin, don't open your black eyes in that astounded way. She don't mean one bit of harm. It is born in her, and I don't believe she even knows she does it. She likes them all, and in the sweet joyousness of her temper wants to please them all, and she succeeds She is a dear child, and no one shall scold her if I can help it.

It is so delightful to have the boys here. I wish you could have seen John and Harry the day they passed through on their way to Harper's Ferry. Such children Margie! it seemed so pitiful. But they were perfectly radiant with happiness. They rushed in on us one morning when mother and myself were washing the tea-things, and it was as bad as being hugged by a couple of young cubs. I did not get my breath for five minutes to inquire:

"What upon the earth are you doing here dressed that way?" (They had on red flannel shirts as an apology for uniforms.)

"Fighting," said Harry.

"Kissing you, Nell," said John, as he repeated the operation; "and I tell you it is a great relief to my pent-up Utica. I have not seen a girl I could kiss for nearly nine months. It's right hard on a fellow!"

"Pshaw!" I said, "don't be a goose if you can help it. Tell me what you came for. I thought you were studying hard at the University, and here you walk in upon me, dressed for all the world like firemen! So do be satisfactory for once and tell me what it all means."

"Well, if you will know," said Johnny, with mock pomposity, sticking his thumbs in the arm-holes of his shirt and swaggering up and down the room, "the Southern Confederacy, after an existence of a few weeks, concluded that matters were in a bad way unless they could draw Mr. John Holcombe from his retirement and give him a position of responsibility suited to his — well — to his — ah — talents and acquirements. The rest can be guessed. My ambition is fully gratified, so here I am."

"What appointment?" I asked.

"High private in the rear ranks, with the permission to make myself a General as soon as possible."

They went off to Harper's Ferry that night. We all walked down to the cars to see them, of course imagining that they would find bloody graves before their return. But I must tell you a funny thing about this. Betsey, my maid, went down with us, and as we stood in the street watching those poor little boys — for they were nothing more — the tears came into my eyes as I thought how few! and how young! to go on such serious business. Betsey interrupted my thoughts by saying:

"Now I tell you, Miss Ellen, won't Mr. Linkum feel hisself sot down when he see all dis army comin'?"

I could not help laughing heartily to think how small a way they would go to that much to-be-desired result.

Colonel Murray comes to see us very often and tells us a great deal about you all; he says you were a regular Spartan wife, and buckled on his sword for the conflict. I don't know how you could have done it. I feel like putting my arms out and holding them all back from the danger. And yet I should despise them if they consented. My principles are strong, but I think my nerves are timid.

I wish Uncle Ned was with this part of the army, though I expect Aunt Jean is very glad to have him away from the border. I am glad Uncle George, Mr. Marshall and himself are together. Cousin Mary is with Cousin Cynthia, and Auntie says she will go when they establish *hospitals* in Richmond. She can't leave now. She is perfectly indefatigable, and they say does the poor fellows more good than all of the doctors.

One of our enterprises is our "hospital kitchen," which means simply that the ladies have rented a room and take turns in going down to it each day to prepare delicacies for the sick, and the doctors send there for such food as the men ought to have. We enjoy it very much, though sometimes it is right *warm*. I am becoming a famous cook.

But, dear Margie, I have written you a perfect volume. Please return my favor *in kind* and degree. I want to see your dear handwriting once more, and Captain Murray is so jealous of your letters that he never will let me see a line, or even read them to me.

You ought to hear the account he gives of *the boy;* of course there never was such a baby. How I should love to see you both!

Give my love to dear Aunt Jean, and a kiss to little Eddy, and receive for yourself the devoted love of your cousin,

ELLEN RANDOLPH.

LETTER FROM MRS. MURRAY TO MISS RANDOLPH.

ROSE HILL, June 5th, 1861.

DEAR NELL,—If you could have seen the joy with which the sight of your handwriting was greeted, you would be tempted to send it to us oftener. Captain Murray, of course, writes constantly, but he has too much to ask about, to tell a great deal, and the little insight you give us into family concerns is very delightful. It is true Mary writes every now and then, but it is really amusing to see how she can make up a letter without telling anything we want to know. She is *non compos* I think just now. Well, let her skim the cream of her life before it sours; I would not change with her.

Mamma and myself could but draw the contrast between your lives of activity and ours of stagnation. We seem to be completely cut off from the world. We see no one, and if it were not for the mail I don't know how we would exist. Mamma manages to keep herself busy as usual, and I see her now from my window with that same little red and white key-basket, which you used to say had learned to look like her, wending her way down to the hen-house. I judge this last by her company, as Aunt Aggy is behind her with her crock of "*feed.*" I will give you a picture of mamma, as

I know you want to see her; indeed, I will upon second consideration paint the whole group.

Mamma has not grown taller, but wider, and her dear little figure is draped in a purple calico, with a ruffled white apron and a long white cambric sun-bonnet—everything about her of course the pink of neatness. I wish I could say as much for her hen-nurse, Aunt Aggy, whose attire is more picturesque than pretty or cleanly, her blue cotton dress being better acquainted with the soil than is quite becoming, and so short as to display her feet and ankles, to great disadvantage. The brightest streak of sunshine in the group, however, is Eddy, riding his stick horse and prancing and curvetting in the most enthusiastic way; it seems to be a very fiery steed, judging from his efforts to hold it in. If I had not seen him overcome greater dangers in this line, I would be apprehensive of some serious accident. He is a beautiful boy, with his long flaxen curls, rosy cheeks and black eyes, and is a great amusement to the household; of course he is an enthusiastic Confederate, and his threats against the Yankees, who have come down, he thinks, for the special purpose of putting an end to his "Papa," are dire.

But, "Cousin Ellen," well you may wish to see "*the boy;*" it is a privilege you can't enjoy every day. That blessing is reserved for his "Mamma." *Without partiality*, I will say he is the most splendid baby I ever saw, and every day he learns some new way which is more beautiful than the last. If his dear papa could just see him! I miss him so in everything, but especially with the baby.

You ask me how I could send my husband off to the army. I ask myself twenty times a day the same

question. Surely if any one might have been excused he was that one — a foreigner, and so short a time a resident. But then we thought Virginia, is my State, and therefore his. If she had continued prosperous he would have enjoyed her prosperity. And would it have been right for him, or for me, to take advantage of a mere subterfuge to avoid the danger? No! I feel sure we were right in our decision, but as if my heart had been torn out by the roots in making it. I require him so all the time. I get wrong when he is away from me; he is my "better half" in more ways than one, Nell.

I can imagine Aunty at the hospitals; it is just the life for her. Bless her dear heart! how I should love to see her, and Aunt Mary also. I envy you your busy lives. It is so hard to sit still and do nothing, except the work which would be ours in ordinary times.

How is all this to end? Of course I never doubt our success for an instant. God helps the right; but we are so vitally interested in immediate results. Every man of our family is in the field, besides so many friends. I feel afraid to look forward. Mr. Murray says there must be a great battle soon. How will we ever bear the sound of the guns! I have to exert myself upon mamma's account, she is so dreadfully depressed. I cannot believe that for the present papa is safe. He writes, as usual, cheerfully and hopefully, and I expect Uncle George and himself enjoy each other in spite of the times.

Mammy is very well, and quite indignant at all this fuss to set her free. I don't believe she would ever leave us. I am not so certain about the rest. The love of freedom is very strong in the human heart.

Well, if they will be better off, I for my part am very willing, though it would grieve me for them to be unfaithful. The tie between master and servant is very binding, and can only be broken by a great wrench.

But I must stop. Love to all. Tell Mary mamma says don't run any chance of being left in the lines if our army should retreat. She will send the carriage for her at any rate next week.

Good-bye. Write soon to your devoted cousin,

MARGARET MURRAY.

CHAPTER II.

"Beautiful as sweet!
And young as beautiful! And soft as young!
And gay as soft! And innocent as gay!"—Young.

It was the season of the year when the bud and blossom of early spring, so often delusive in its beauty because of nipping frosts, gives place to the more certain promise of early summer. Tree and shrub hung thick with young fruit; the flowers — those "bright mosaics" of Nature — tessellated her floor with their luxurious bloom;

"The happy grass
Was sprinkled with the o'er-blown leaves
Of wild white roses."

The waving fields of grain began to assume that golden hue which invites the sickle. The sky was cloudless, save in the western horizon, where the orb of day, now near its setting, approached its gorgeous couch of purple and gold. Clouds piled themselves on clouds mountain high, now assuming the appearance of a many-towered city, and then flying on the wings of the evening breeze to feed the imagination of the beholder by rolling themselves into other and more fanciful shapes, whilst the prodigal sun lavished upon them his brightest beams, until in gratitude they reflected back the glory shed, and danced and glittered in the borrowed light.

It was a scene which, if witnessed but once in a lifetime, would fill God's creatures with awe and praise;

but because "He maketh His sun to shine on the evil and on the good," because He repeats His blessings to them daily, they are passed by unnoticed, or without even an aspiration of thanksgiving.

The streets of the little town of Winchester, bore a strangely busy appearance to those who could contrast it with its former condition of chronic quietness, where the greatest excitement had been the arrival of the daily mail, or an occasional marriage or death in its community. Now prancing steeds were seen coming and going in all directions, whilst their riders in their gay uniforms of gray and gold, presented a gallant appearance as they dashed along the streets, looking a part of the animals they bestrode, and gracefully returned the greetings bestowed from the various windows and porches as they passed along.

In the distance, white conical tents gleamed through the groves, betraying the situation of the different encampments; whilst the road in every direction was studded with army wagons, whose soiled covers and meagre-looking draught animals, already showed that the war was not in its first stage.

Nor was the air of busy preparation confined to the town, for in one field was an artillery company going through its drill, in the next enclosure a cavalry regiment performed its evolutions, whilst the infantry "shouldered arms" and "presented arms" at every turn.

At the entrance of the town from the north stands a large red brick dwelling-house, built upon what was one corner of old Fort Washington. It is rather a sombre-looking building in spite of its evident and attractive homelike aspect; its brick walls have darkened

from age, and the brown paint of window-blinds and porch does not tend to brighten its appearance. On both sides of the entrance, however, a sunny green yard presents an inviting scene to the visitor, and the row of trees in front throws a grateful shade.

Sitting in the porch, enjoying the beauty of the setting sun, is a family party, to whom I wish to present my reader as containing some important *dramatis personæ* connected with this story.

The party consists of four persons — an old lady; another who has passed middle age, but whose youthful appearance forbids our describing her as old; a young girl; and a youth in the Confederate uniform of a private soldier.

The spokesman of the party is the old lady, who although she has the "crown of glory" which entitles her to the highest honors of time, yet by a certain youthful brightness of manner, an impulse and earnestness of speech accompanied by animated gestures, manages to combine with it the charm of youth. And here let me pause to say, that there is but one thing more beautiful than a beautiful youth, and that is a beautiful old age — as the fruit which has stood the storm and the burning suns of an entire season, reaches its highest and richest maturity just before it falls to the ground.

She is evidently detailing some experience which excites the amusement of the rest.

"He was a poor, miserable looking fellow," she said, "who several days ago excited my commiseration by his wretched appearance; but when I came to examine him I found it was only a case of desperate home-sickness. By-the-bye, these poor North Carolinians die of it

often. To-day as soon as he saw me he called me to him, and told me in his most mournful tones that he was convinced that his time had come! I tried to raise his spirits and relieve him of the impression which I was sure was an erroneous one, but it was no use; die he would in spite of me, and he ended by confiding to my care this little box, which I was to convey to his mother at the earliest moment, as his latest bequest. Now I want you all to guess what it is," and she held up before them a small black box about two inches square.

"Jewelry," suggested the lady beside her.

"No."

"Money," guessed the young man, taking the box from her.

"No."

"A lock of his hair," said the dark-eyed girl, looking over his shoulder.

"No, all wrong. But here comes Mary; let us see what she says."

And as she spoke a young girl advanced through the door-way and joined the party.

The sun has just disappeared behind the gilded clouds, but he is scarcely missed in the sparkle of light, life and joy which greets us in this youthful figure, she might aptly be crowned with early flowers and stand as the very impersonation of Spring. Her figure is about the medium height, beautifully rounded and proportioned from the graceful throat to the tiny foot which peeps from beneath the folds of her skirt. Her dress is of a soft violet color of some gossamer texture, and the loose sleeves falling back disclose arms and hands, white, soft and dimpled as an infant's.

Dark eyes, which in this mirthful moment strike you as full of brilliancy, but looking into their depths there is a melting softness tempering their fire which wins on the instant; cheeks glowing like the innermost leaves of the Hermosa rose, and a skin of dazzling fairness; but the crowning feature after all in this picture of rare loveliness is the hair. Turn not away fair reader, in disgust and disappointment, but the graceful head is adorned with ripples of red hair. An effort has been made to catch and restrain this unruly member, to place it in bonds and reduce it to submission; but it seems to laugh at the futile effort, escaping at every point, curling itself in a ringlet against the white throat, rippling in waves over the head, and ringing itself upon the broad brow, besides establishing a kind of halo of gold outside of its more substantial works, and forming a beautiful bronze frame-work for the mirthful young face.

The story of the home-sick soldier was told her, and the box consigned to her hands with many an injunction to "guess fair and not peep," which she tried faithfully to do, holding it before her eyes, shaking it by her ear, and applying it to her nose, but no light was thrown on the mystery.

"I have tried three of my senses without gaining an idea; now tell me, Aunt Annie, which of the other two would decide the matter soonest."

Mrs. Mason laughed merrily as she answered, "It has more to do with the taste than anything else."

"Then of course it is something to eat," said Mary. "Ah, I have it at last!" clapping her hands gleefully. "Generous boy! he has sent his last rations to his mother; this box is just about large enough to hold them."

A general laugh followed this sally, and the guess being pronounced a failure, Mrs. Mason opened the box and disclosed to view a full set of *false teeth.*

The mirth became uproarious at the unexpected solution of the mystery, which was interrupted by the sudden change from merriment to a soft anxiety in Mary's face as she turned to Mrs. Mason and said:

"Poor fellow! Aunty, he did not die, did he?"

"Oh no," was the answer; "he will be better to-morrow. I told him, by way of rousing him, that he must come up here and get his dinner, and I would make you girls sing and play for him."

"But, Auntie," the face smiling all over once more, "he must have his teeth before he comes to dinner."

"Oh yes! he shall have them the first thing in the morning. But here comes George."

As she spoke, a tall, light-haired young man approached the house on horseback, and leaping off, tied his steed to the tree and came towards them, his spurs clanking against the pavement as he walked.

"Well, Dr.," queried John, "off duty for the day?"

"No, indeed," was the answer; "when is a Dr. off duty? I would rather be an ambulance-driver."

"Why, what's the matter?" said Mary, as she accepted his greeting; "is the service of our country becoming tiresome? From the ardor with which we volunteered I thought we would never weary. I feel discouraged."

Mary was too pretty not to be smiled upon, even in her most provoking mood, but it was only a reluctant smile as he said:

"Ah well, I am tired of this utter stagnation. I volunteered to fight, not to sit down here and see the men

who have come from their homes to shed their blood, if need be, for their country, die like dogs in this miserable place."

"I am sorry we have no better to offer you," said Mrs. Randolph.

"Well," said he, "if you had seen, as I have, six men carried out to-day — brave, daring young fellows, who left their homes so full of hope and life, and not even to have an opportunity to fight."

"It is dreadful!" was the general exclamation.

"Yes, and the worst of it is I don't see any help for it. There may be, shut up in General Johnston's head; but no one else sees it, and he keeps it to himself. I tell you if there is not an active campaign soon I believe that a third of these men will die; they get sick, and there don't seem to be much the matter with them, and they have not the spirits to recover."

"Goodness, George," said Ellen, "I never heard such a Jeremiad: it is enough to give us all the horrors!"

"What can we do for you," said Mary, "to put a more cheerful spirit into you? Will you have a song, or your supper, or indeed anything we can give you, to rouse you from this lamentable state of despondency? Even my new bonnet is at your service, and in these times such an offer is no contemptible one, I assure you."

"Well, come here and sit by me, and let me look at you: that is the most cheering thing I can suggest in your gift just now," was the laughing answer, as the young surgeon, fairly won out of his grumbling humor, drew his pretty cousin to the seat beside him. "Now I do feel better, more hopeful and happier altogether."

"And there is the supper bell to finish the business,"

said Mary, disengaging herself from him. "More substantial pleasures are in store for you, to which I lead the way."

CHAPTER III.

——"the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner, and all the quality,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!
And O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
The immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit."

SHAKSPEARE.

"WELL, here you are at last," said Ellen Randolph, as Mary Holcombe and herself stepped from the porch, ready accoutred for some expedition, and advanced to meet Mrs. Randolph and Mrs. Mason, who approached, each bearing an empty basket, whilst Betsey followed with two baskets equally destitute of contents.

"We thought you never would come," said Mary. "Nell and myself have been standing here waiting for you for an age."

"Well, what is the cause of the great anxiety to see us?" said Mrs. Randolph, whilst Mrs. Mason took advantage of the pause to manipulate a large palm-leaf fan, which by-the-bye formed her coat-of-arms from early spring to late autumn.

"We are so anxious to go to the review, and have no one to go with us; the boys all have to be on the ground, of course," explained Ellen.

"Oh, how unfortunate!" said Mrs. Randolph, her usually placid face clouding; "I am so tired, I don't think I could go to save my life. And besides, your father said he would be at home by six o'clock, and I must stay to see him."

Both girls turned towards Mrs. Mason, while Mary said with an effort not to look disappointed, "I think it is very selfish in us to ask it, as you have both been so busy all day. Let's stay at home, Nell."

In the meantime Mrs. Mason's face, under the salutary influence of the fan, had assumed a less flushed appearance, and she asked:

"How far is it?"

"Just there at the Old Fair Grounds, not a quarter of a mile," answered both girls, pointing to an enclosure where already large bodies of troops could be seen, mingled with the gayer clothing of the other sex.

"Oh well, I will go with you. Just wait until I cool off a minute and get some of the *hospital* off of me; I don't feel fit to be seen now."

"Thank you! thank you! you dear old unselfish Aunty. I wonder if you ever do think of yourself when you can do anything for other people? You are quite an institution in these times."

"Oh yes," said the old lady laughing, as she walked towards the house; "Aunty is very good just now, when you can't get any one else; but just let one of those dashing young soldiers come along, and 'Aunty' will be forgotten."

"Oh! for shame!" exclaimed both girls, adding with a laugh which threw a doubt upon the assertion, "We would a great deal rather have you than any one else."

It did not take long for good Mrs. Mason to make herself ready, and a few minutes' walk brought them to the ground, which presented to their view a new and interesting scene.

A background of mountains which distance had

robed in its azure hue, against which was clearly defined the darker shade of groves and forests. The enclosure within which they stood consisted of about four or five acres of level ground, well suited to the purpose for which it had been chosen. Within this space were collected about eight thousand men, infantry, artillery, and cavalry, whose new uniforms added not a little to the gaiety of the scene.

Many a glance was turned towards our little party, and not a few salutations were given from the ranks. The infantry stood in their long motionless lines, looking for all the world, Mary said, like the wooden soldiers you buy in little boxes out of toy-shops. They looked as if they were merged into one. No individuality, no difference; they formed one army, one body of men.

The cavalry were deployed on each side, their beautiful horses pawing and chafing at the enforced inaction, and snorting impatiently as if, like Job's warhorse, they "scented the battle afar off." In the rear the dark howitzers had their stations, their sombre appearance well suited to their work; they reminded one of the old guillotine, which was always hung with black when it dealt its death-blow. The gloom of their aspect was somewhat relieved, however, by the bright red fringes of the artillery uniform.

It was not only an interesting but a strange sight to see so many gathered on this little spot of ground, all with one aim and end; and notwithstanding the new and cheerful face put upon it, it was also a sad sight. Here the various callings of life had their representatives, and rank and wealth stood side by side with uneducated poverty. Man was man, each with a life to offer up, each with a courage to dare danger. Here

were all the Southern States represented, the Lone Star of Texas and the Palmetto of South Carolina side by side with the White Pelican of Louisiana and the *Sic Semper Tyrannis* of Virginia, and all mingling with the common standard, the "Stars and Bars," fit representative of the separate sovereignty of each State and their unity of purpose under one standard. "Distinct as the billows, one as the sea," a noble brotherhood, which adversity but bound the more closely, because cemented by blood, which is indissoluble.

Conspicuous amongst their fellows, even at this early stage of their career, were three figures, to whom I would call particular attention, both because of their after-career, which has introduced them to the world at large, and that they will be often mentioned in this story.

On the right of the mass of infantry, and in front of a regiment of cavalry, mounted upon a jet black horse, conspicuous for its beauty, sat a young man of slight wiry figure, below rather than above medium height. There was a strange grace in the poise of his person; and although his horse was motionless, no one could have looked at him without pronouncing him a master in the art of horsemanship.

A swarthy complexion, whose pallor was rendered more striking from the long black beard which swept to his waist, full moustache and jetty hair, with which mingled the sweeping black ostrich feather which drooped from his military cap. His manner was grave and even sad, as his eagle eye, like a flash of lightning in a cloudy sky, roved restlessly in every direction, as if but following the habit of his life, even in this time of inaction, of allowing nothing to escape his notice. To

those who shared this time of trial and danger, who in this border warfare remember the feeling of comparative security when General Turner Ashby was scouting in front of the army, it would not be worth while to name him; but for the benefit of others we pronounce his early death to have been one of the most severe blows our Confederacy suffered in its first years.

And now turn we to a second picture, a tall gaunt figure, ungainly in its proportions, awkward in its movements, sitting erect with military stiffness upon the saddle, whilst his knees were drawn up in an attitude which, although it might possibly have been comfortable, certainly was not graceful; features sharply defined, a mouth whose thin lips bespoke an iron will and firmness of purpose, and an eye whose mild hue was set at defiance by the fire which gleamed from it — there was that in the whole man which stamped him a hero of indomitable courage, inflexible firmness, and resolute daring.

Reader, the portrait is drawn from one which is indelibly imprinted upon the memory of every Southern man and woman, whose eyes wept and whose hearts bled over his fall: it is that of Colonel Jackson, afterwards General Stonewall Jackson, the Christian soldier, who to the genius of the Great Napoleon united the purity and integrity of Washington.

The third figure sat at a distance thoughtfully reviewing the scene. Like Ashby, he was rather under the medium height, but of stouter, squarer proportions, with a broad intellectual brow, an earnest eye, and a grave, dignified appearance. You could imagine that grand combinations and far-reaching stratagems could have their birth in his brain. His eye wandered over the

men, his army; he might have been gravely pondering their fate — who could foretell it? — but he knew that a few days must decide it for many of them.

Perhaps my reader guesses already that we point him to General Joseph E. Johnston.

The review passed pretty much as all reviews do, very imposing and interesting so long as the novelty lasted, but very tiresome for the ladies standing in the hot sun without any support or shelter; and our party soon turned for amusement to more every-day matters.

"Oh look at Fanny Burwell! she has a new hat," said Ellen. "I wonder if she got it through the lines? I suppose that is the latest touch. And my gracious! if I could not get more decent clothes than Hattie Ashby, I would stay at home; she is a perfect sight."

"Ah, Mrs. Mason," said a tall, strong-minded female walking up to that lady, "I intended meeting you at your hospital this morning, but had to go off in another direction to see about some material to make Confederate flags for the different regiments. I thought you would like me to come and read and talk to your poor men. Such heathens as they are, most of them! Actually it is hard to believe they were brought up in a Christian country. But I will come to-morrow."

"Never mind, Miss Elizabeth," said Mrs. Mason, with an effort at cordiality; "you know I give myself up to my hospital, and so many of the men require perfect quiet that the doctors prefer that none but the regular attendants should go in. Poor boys! many of them are very ignorant, but very teachable."

"Well now, I don't find it so," was the answer. "I am obliged to insist upon reading to them sometimes; and actually one of them told me yesterday, when I had

finished that sweet little tract on the Last Judgment, that he believed his chance of heaven was as good as some who made such an everlasting talk over it. Such depravity!"

The corners of Mrs. Mason's mouth twitched a little, while Ellen and Mary turned away to hide a smile. "I often think," said Mrs. Mason mildly, "that we err in our zeal; it requires a great deal of wisdom to deal with many of them, and we ought to make religion as enticing and attractive to them as we can."

"Of course," said the lady, "but I don't think we ought to stop for rebuffs or opposition. We must be prepared to 'suffer reproach for our Master,' and the 'Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence.'"

"All that is true," said Mrs. Mason, "but I don't interpret it as you do. Our Saviour set us an example of gentleness and love which we would do well to follow. If we love these precious souls as we ought, there will be no difficulty about the rest."

"Ah well, my dear madam," said Miss Elizabeth, "we both take our Bibles as our guides, I hope; but I do not think we will ever agree upon these matters," and she walked away, much to the relief of all parties.

"It is a great pity," said good Mrs. Mason, "that Elizabeth Harris has not a husband and half-a-dozen children to use up her surplus energy; it flies abroad like a great tornado, knocking over and injuring every one it comes in contact with."

"Only think," said Mary, laughing, "of a sick nervous man taken possession of by Miss Elizabeth, and having religion rammed into him with her hard fists! I don't wonder they resist."

"I heard Mr. Hautman speaking of her the other day,'

said Ellen; "he says the boys have the greatest horror of her. She comes in with a Bible and tracts in one hand and a pile of towels in the other, and proceeds in her own fashion to the cleansing of body and soul. He says it is enough to make any one die laughing to see one of them taken possession of. If you could only hear him tell about it! I can't do justice to it. I shall have to get him on the subject, for your benefit, some day."

"Poor Elizabeth!" ejaculated Mrs. Mason, repenting her uncharitable comments, "she certainly is a good woman and means to do her duty; I wish she had more light in the performance of it."

"How lovely May Hamilton is to-day!" said Mary; "she looks like a snowdrop."

"Yes, and she is as sweet and modest as she looks," said Ellen. "I don't at all wonder that Mr. Allen should be so enraptured with her."

"Well, I confess," said Mary, "I enjoy the flash and brilliancy of Julia Bell more; she takes you by storm, there is so much nerve in her."

"Oh, I don't! I like to see a soft gentle woman of all things; we can have the flash and dash in the other sex," said Ellen.

"I wish we could have a little of it now," said Mary. "This reminds me for all the world of an old-time Methodist meeting, with all the 'brethren' on one side and the 'sisters' on the other; a comfortable mingling of the two is so much more pleasant."

"Good gracious, children!" said Mrs. Mason, "we certainly are beset to-day; I see Nancy Temple bearing down in this direction. For my sake please avoid rudeness, Mary; you have so little control over your risibles."

"She always reminds me," said Mary, laughing, "of a doll-baby; and I am tormented, all the time I am with her, by a desire to find out whether or not her clothes are sewed on, or whether she can be dressed or undressed, which was my delight in a doll-baby when I was a child."

"How old is Miss Nancy, Aunty?" said Ellen.

"Let me see," said Mrs. Mason, assuming a deeply thoughtful air, and using the fan vigorously: "she was a good-sized girl when I was married, twenty-eight years ago. I remember now how she looked when she came up with a bottle of cologne from her mother to put on my toilet. Wedding presents were not as fashionable then as now, and the kindness made an impression on me. I should think she must have been twelve years old then."

"I expect," said Mary, "if she had known that you were going to freshen up your memory on the tender point of her age with that same cologne, you never would have received it."

"Well, I never could understand why women should be so very sensitive about their ages. I never was," said Mrs. Mason.

"That is because you married young. Aunt Annie," said Ellen, "I can understand it: the world slights and laughs at old maids, and it is to avoid this that women try to hide the fact."

"Well, all I can say is, it is very foolish," said Mrs. Mason; "there are always plenty of people to keep such records, even if there were no family Bibles. But here she comes; behave yourselves, girls!"

"Yes, Aunty, we will," said Mary, amusing herself with Mrs. Mason's uneasiness. "But indeed I must find

out about the clothes; it is necessary for my peace of mind."

"What is the important matter on the tapis which is so necessary for your 'peace of mind'?" said the lady in question, catching the last words as she came up.

"Well, a good many things," said Mary; "but just now, to know where you got your bonnet."

"You would never guess," was the smiling reply.

"Paris," suggested Mary, triumphantly.

"Ah, you mischievous girl! you know better. But what would you think if I told you that it was quite a piece of Southern enterprise, born of present emergencies. I made it myself!"

"No!" and Mary held up her hands in mock amazement.

"Yes I did. But it is no trouble to me to do these little things; I have always had a taste from a child for tossing up Frenchy little affairs. My doll-babies were the most stylish doll-babies in the country."

Mrs. Mason looked on thorns, but no warning shakes of the head seemed to make any impression on Mary. She proceeded most diligently, under cover of an intention to learn and admire, to investigate closely each article of attire, encouraged thereto by Ellen's suppressed amusement. Determined to change the conversation, Mrs. Mason said:

"I suppose you are busy as the rest of us, attending the hospitals, Nancy."

"Oh no, ma'am, of course not. My mamma would not let me go on any account; she says they are no places for young ladies."

"Yes! that's true," said Mrs. Mason gravely.

"No," continued Miss Nancy, "my time is fully oc-

cupied at home; I have visitors from morning to night. Mamma says she don't know how I manage to keep up a supply of small-talk. Colonel Johnston sat with me until twelve o'clock last night, and indeed (consciously) I may say every night. Mamma says she will have to break it up, or I will look as old as the hills from loss of rest; but really one can't help it, can we, girls?"

"Oh," said Mrs. Mason in a tone of relief, for the mirth was becoming irrepressible in Mary's eyes, "the review is over. I am so glad; now let's go home."

More easily said than done, as the good old lady found when she attempted to pilot her two charges through the crowd.

Acquaintance after acquaintance amongst the released soldiers claimed a word, until at last they were brought to a standstill.

"Ah, yong ladies," said a young man in the uniform of a private, elbowing his way through the crowd, "you haf tempt me to desert my post this efening."

"That is a bad account to give of yourself, Mr. Hautman," said Ellen; "I did not know anything could do that."

"Der you make a meestake," was the answer; "for I have luf de ladies all my lif, and the Confederey only few weeks. I mus' be constant to my first luf."

"Ah, Mr. Hautman," said Mary, "we want you to tell us about how the ladies at the hospitals do."

"Oh, Miss Holcome, aexcuse me," bowing to Mrs. Mason, "de ladies is angels of mercy to the sick soldier; but some of dem do vash too hart."

There was a general laugh at this stroke, the humor

of which lost nothing from his broken English and face beaming with the full enjoyment of the joke.

"Dere is vone lady," he continued, encouraged by his appreciative audience, "who is so goot she think not of no trouble. She come in with her pretty letil Bible and *trash* in one han' and her nice white towel in de oder; en, my dear madam," turning to Mrs. Mason, "you would luf to see how glad de poor man is to see her. You see dey want vash so verree mouch; but"—with a quizzical nod of his head—"dey is clean enuf fen she is dun wid 'em. Dey want not to see vater no more dat day."

His manner was irresistibly comic, and even Mrs. Mason was obliged to join in the laugh which ensued, though she said gravely, as soon as she could command herself:

"It is well that the ladies do not give their services for thanks, or they would be very much disappointed."

"Now, my dear madam, do aexcuse me," said the young German earnestly; "de soldier would be bad off widout de ladies; dey would suffer much more in dis worl', en de nex', I am afraid. But ever now en den, it is true, dey do vash too hard. Dere is vone poor fellow who know so litel what is goot for him, dat he say he would rader die mid de dirt on den to be vash so verree much."

"Come on, girls," said Mrs. Mason, utterly unable to stem the torrent of amusement, "we must go home. We will be glad if Mr. Hautman will go with us to tea, and he has my promise that he shall not have his face washed during the evening."

CHAPTER IV.

"The dawn is overcast, the morning lowers,
And heavily the cloud brings on the day,
The great, the important day, big with the fate
Of Cato and of Rome."—ADDISON.

"I AM miserable!" ejaculated Mrs. Mason in an agitated voice, making a sudden entry into the parlor a few days after the review. That she announced a fact, no one could have doubted who saw the cloud upon her usually bright face.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed several voices at once; and as Mrs. Mason threw herself into a chair and covered her face with her hands, the whole party gathered around her in breathless anxiety. It was some seconds before she could explain.

"I went down to my hospital this morning, and what was my surprise to find several ambulances before the door; some full, and others filling, with my poor sick boys. In answer to my inquiries they told me that orders had been given to move them from Winchester, and they thought the army was falling back."

"I don't believe it."

"I can't believe it."

"They never would be so cruel!" ejaculated the horror-stricken ladies.

"Unfortunately," said Captain Murray, who was present, "neither persons nor places are to be considered in these times; individuals must be sacrificed to the general good."

"Do you believe it, brother?" said Mary Holcombe whose pallid cheek and tearful eye formed a sad contrast with her usual demeanor.

"I don't know anything about it," was the answer. "I am not in the confidence of the Prime Ministers, but I confess it looks like it, and you ladies will have to learn the first hard lesson this war gives you; if you desire our success, as I am sure you do, you must be willing to submit even to desertion. I feel assured of General Johnston's wisdom as an officer, and that he knows what he is about. We can't all be Generals, so we must trust to him."

He spoke cheerfully, putting his arm around Mary, who stood by him, and stooping to kiss her upturned face, he said:

"Poor little girl! not much of a soldier, I am afraid; but I must take you out too if it can be done."

"Oh, Captain Murray," said Ellen, "it frightens me to death to hear you speaking as if such a thing could be possible."

"It is possible," said he gently, "but not certain. I will go and find out, however, and come and let you know."

He soon returned and told them that it was even so; the whole army was on the move.

"General Patterson is at Bunker's Hill with twelve thousand men, and we are moving away from him —why, I cannot say, but General Johnston seems in fine spirits, so I suppose it is all right. By-the-bye, Col. Jackson has been appointed Brigadier-General."

To describe the dismay of the people of Winchester when the fact became patent that the town was to be evacuated, would be impossible. They had fondly

flattered themselves, with but little of the gift of prophetic vision, that Winchester was to be a military post for the Confederates during the war; and now to be suddenly deserted, with an enemy only twelve miles off, filled them with consternation. All of the exaggerated horrors which had filled the papers, of the treatment designed for them by the Federal army, rose up before them and paralyzed them with terror. We all know that there is nothing so hard to bear as an unknown danger; the imagination, with nothing to limit its strides is a cruel master, leaping over probabilities, and launching its victim in a dark forest where there is no light to guide, and where to the excited fancy danger waits at every turn.

Captain Murray tried in vain to obtain some mode of conveyance for Mary, but was at last obliged to abandon the idea of taking her out, and left her in the care of her aunts.

The scene was one full of interest and excitement; the streets were thronged with the crowding troops, and the long lines of wagons stretched as far as the eye could reach. There was every evidence of haste; the officers rode here and there, hurrying the troops; ambulances were hastily filled with the sick, but so insufficient was the supply of these conveyances that it was at last determined not to attempt the entire removal of the hospitals. Poor pallid-faced boys could be seen issuing from these establishments, intent upon escaping with the army, or even dying on the road rather than fall into the hands of the enemy, and in some cases the symptoms of an active movement brought back the hue of life to the wan cheek simultaneously with hope to the heart; and mingled with all this were not a few

murmurs that they were compelled ignominiously to turn their backs on the enemy after waiting so long for a chance to meet him; nor were the non-combatants the least excited of the mass; the windows, yards and porches of the different residences were crowded with old men, women and children, waving a farewell to sons, brothers, husbands and friends, too many of whom they were never to see again on this side of the grave. Tears fell like rain over the scene, and many a fervent heart sent up ejaculations of entreaty to Heaven for the protection of its loved ones.

Mr. Randolph's house presented to our view a scene of excited interest, the porch and street in front of it being full of soldiers taking a hasty leave of friends whose open and generous hospitality had been extended so freely to them; and Ellen, Mrs. Randolph, and Mrs. Mason strove to hide their distress at the change in the aspect in their affairs, and their great anxieties, under a cheerful manner. Laughter and tears mingled freely.

At a window in the hall opening on a pretty little green yard, sat Mary Holcombe, her eyes heavy with weeping. She had hoped to the last that some way would be provided for her return home; and when she found that the idea had been abandoned, she gave herself up completely to terror and distress, refusing to be comforted.

Nor can we wonder very much at her agitation, as there was every prospect not only of her falling into the hands of the enemy, but of being cut off from her family, it might be for months, and that too when a battle was imminent.

Every one knows, or at least every woman knows, when once the floodgates of the heart are opened,

how impossible it is to stem the torrent which flows and overflows in spite of all efforts at self-control; every circumstance, however trivial, brings the tears afresh. This was the case with Mary Holcombe; and many an admiring young soldier went away wondering if it could be that she was shedding those tears for him alone. One had his hopes so excited that he turned back and begged for some token from her that she remembered their intercourse with pleasure, and went off pressing a blue ribbon to his heart; another kissed her hand, and asked her to watch out for *him* on the return of the army. Mary promised everything, and wept faithfully over them all, but without a particle of the tender sentiment at her heart. Indeed, just as one fine fellow was about giving vent to some very touching expressions of admiration and regret, her ear caught the sound of John's voice in the porch. Much to the astonishment and chagrin of the young man, she was gone, leaving him with an unfinished sentence upon his lips, and throwing herself into her brother's arms, she sobbed out:

"Oh, Johnny, take care of yourself! don't let the guns hurt you! It almost kills me to think of those dreadful men shooting right at you."

"Pshaw, Mary!" said Johnny, his manliness a little outraged by this outburst, "don't you be uneasy; I will come back all right. I believe you think the Yankee army has come down here just to pick off your friends; but I don't believe the bullet is moulded which is to hit me. But I must go. Come, say good-bye, and cheer up! Why, you are no soldier at all!" and he hugged and kissed her with the greatest tenderness and affection in spite of his rough words.

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Mason, putting her arms around him and her mouth to his ear, "ask God to be with you on the battle-field; don't go without the shield of His protection."

"Oh yes, Aunty, I will," said he aloud; "I will remember all your sermons and good advice when I get there. Come on, Harry; the boys are far ahead of us."

Harry did not come at once, however; he had his arms around Aunt Annie; and there was a moisture in his eyes as she whispered her last words to him, and as he kissed her he said:

"I shan't forget Aunty, and please pray for me."

"Mrs. Mason," said a tall, handsome young man in captain's uniform, "please take charge of these for me and send them to my wife; she will value them if I should never return," and he put in her hand his sleeve-buttons and watch.

The quick tears rushed to her eyes at the sad suggestion; but taking them, she said:

"Certainly, Captain Huntington; but I trust I may have no such sad duty to perform. I hope to give them back to yourself."

"Oh yes, I hope so too," said he, laughing lightly; "I only prepare against possible contingencies. I give my life, if need be, to the cause; but God can bring me through safely: I trust all to Him," and with another bright glance he was gone.

"Going to fight at last, Cousin," said another young boy, shaking her by the hand.

"God go with you, Frank," she said as she kissed him. "I thank Him that your brother and yourself have committed yourselves to Him. I trust that He may bring you back safely."

Mary in the meantime had returned to her seat at the window, and was busy returning the greetings of her numerous friends.

"Nefer mind, Miss Holcome," said a voice beside her, and she turned to meet Mr. Hautman's bright face; "keep your tears, I not dead yet. Why, you bleaf not all dey tell you about de battel. Dey no fight, dey only go for de pic-nic to de woods; we come back to-morrow."

Mary laughed through her tears as she said:

"Mr. Hautman, I believe your laugh never fails."

"What use," he said, "to cry en make my eye red? It do no goot, en spoil my beauty."

"Well, I am less of a philosopher than you are," she said; "and besides I believe I would rather go with the army and fight than to be left here to be captured by the Yankees."

"Why, my dear yong ladie," he said, "dey will no come; but if dey do, no man could hurt you. But I must go; goot-bye. If I should get one bullet trou me, spare one tear for de poor stranger." There was pathos in his tones in spite of his laughing face, and Mary spared more than one tear on the spot!

And now they are all gone, and quiet, like a pall, rests upon the anxious people. No one can settle to anything; and long after the last trace of the army had disappeared, may the citizens be seen with faces turned in their direction, as if their love and solicitude had the power to pierce even the distance and bring to them tidings of the travellers.

For two days did this restless, exhausting suspense last, and then the sound of the cannon travelling over the forty miles which intervened between Manassas and

Winchester announced that the blow had fallen. The forms of men, women and children dotted the hills around the town, as if there was comfort in diminishing the distance, even in that slight degree, between them and their precious ones.

Ah! the horror of suspense at such a time! who can understand it but those who have so often experienced it? How pitiless is thought! How does it go grinding up and down, mocking the agony of its victim, painting with colors painfully vivid the shrinking sensitive flesh and blood so susceptible of suffering, and the tearing cruel iron.

Mothers! sisters! wives! daughters! how have your poor hearts writhed and bled in those long, long hours! Close your eyes as you would, you could not shut out from your mental vision the flying ball, the cruel shell, and the gaping seams in the flesh of your loved ones. But you bear it! Oh yes! Cover over your heart-wounds and smile as you writhe, because this much you sacrifice for the *liberty* of your country!

MANASSAS JUNCTION, July 23d, 1861.

MY DEAR MARY,—I write from the field-hospital, about two miles from the battle of Manassas, where I am on account of a slight wound in my left arm, about which there is not the least occasion to be uneasy, as it gives me very little pain, and the doctors say there is not the smallest danger.

Well, they say we gained a great victory; but it was a fearful fight. I cannot imagine any one ever being the same after witnessing such scenes; it makes the young old in an hour.

I am not going to attempt a description of it — I could

not do it; and besides, I am glad you did not see it; and never, Mary, may you know how it looked! Our dear Harry was killed instantly at the close of the battle. We were charging together when he fell; it was so sudden that I could not realise it. One instant he was cheering so joyously, and the next dead.

We have lost terribly amongst our acquaintances; poor Frank and Charlie Campbell, and Captain Huntington, all gone. We were ordered to fall back, and I heard Frank's cheery voice call out:

"Come here, Charlie; we won't retreat, at any rate."

He had scarcely spoken the words when they were both shot down.

"Let them lie as they fell, together," said Captain Huntington; and in an instant he lay beside them.

Papa was in the fight all day, but escaped unhurt; but B—— and P—— from Winchester are among the killed, and your little friend Hautman severely wounded.

Tell Aunty that Harry remembered her words to him all the way down, and I am sure he died a Christian. Her teachings came back to me amidst the din of the battle; it was a fearful application of them.

George is well, and busy in the hospitals, but he looks very sad and badly; he grieves very much over Harry. Poor Harry!

I shall get a furlough and go home for a few weeks till I get well. I cannot do any good here, and will recover more rapidly at home; so make haste and meet me there, which I have no doubt you can do, as we hear to-day that there is no army occupying the Valley.

I shall take a young friend of mine home with me, a lieutenant in a Georgia company. He is a fine fellow,

and very handsome; we have become great friends in the hospital. Misery loves company.

Give my devoted love to all.

Your devoted brother,

JOHN HOLCOMBE.

CHAPTER V.

"The world's a theatre, the earth's a stage
Which God and Nature do with actors fill."

THOMAS HEYWOOD.

THE month of October may aptly be styled the Claude Lorraine of the year, touching with its glowing tints the verdure of Nature, painting it with its rainbow hues, until the eye, fairly dazzled by the brilliancy, dwells with a sigh of regret upon the rapidly approaching season whose frosty breath will so ruthlessly change this "coat of many colors" into the sad and sombre garb of winter.

Through this rich foliage of red, green, and yellow, gleam the white walls of Rose Hill, the home of the Holcombes, sitting like a queen upon her throne with the smiling earth for her footstool, or crowning her pinnacle like the sun the mountain-top as he sinks to his rest behind it.

Around the house Nature reigns supreme, by her majestic stillness overcoming even the throbs of life in the scene, for there was a pulsation everywhere; the insect buzzing out its brief life in the rays of the sun, the droning of the bee returning to its hive with its burden of sweets, the cattle in the distant meadow cropping the grass or standing knee-deep in the cool stream, the white-fleeced sheep dotting the hill-side, and looking in the distance not unlike untimely snow-balls against the green background; and afar off to the

right, in the direction of the stables, is a drove of galloping horses going to be watered under the superintendence of a woolly-headed urchin, whose distant voice but supplies another throb to the landscape.

But even while we gaze, Nature in her usurped dominion is dethroned by the voice of her master Man, and issuing from the grove we see a party of four persons, two ladies and two gentlemen, mounted on horseback; and suddenly, bounding life seems everywhere, the whole scene is lighted up as by a sudden gleam of sunshine.

"Let's have a race to the house," said a youthful voice; and one of the ladies, touching her pretty white steed, bounded forward in front of the party, as though the mere expression of her wish made the acquiescence of the rest certain. Pausing, however, in her flight, she turned her mirthful face towards her companions, tossing back at the same time the heavy braids of rippling hair which, like a veil wrought of golden threads, almost enveloped her person, curling itself about so as to catch the light most favorably for the full display of its beauty.

Thus dared to the contest, two of the gentlemen put spurs to their horses and were soon by her side. Indeed, perfect mistress as she was of the science of horsemanship, she was no match for them, and this she soon saw.

Taking advantage of the gallantry which prevented their claiming a victory which they might easily have won, and fully satisfied as they were with equality, she moderated the pace of her steed, and thus reduced that of the whole party, until within twenty yards of the goal, when, applying her whip to her horse, she shot like an arrow from its bow beyond her competitors, and

with an impetus which carried her several yards past the stopping point.

Clapping her hands with the glee of a child, she claimed her victory.

"Another leaf in my crown of laurel," she said. "To beat two of Ashby's cavalry is no contemptible achievement."

"Particularly when the victory is so manifestly won by superior skill," said one of her companions laughing, as he dismounted from his horse and went to her assistance.

"Strategy ought to supply lack of strength," said she triumphantly. "I would rather win a battle through superior skill than superior strength; the one is simply a physical endowment, the other accomplished through mental qualifications."

"Well, my gallantry would not allow me to gain a victory over a lady," said the second gentleman, who still sat upon his horse and leaned forward, laughing indolently at her enthusiasm.

"A poor and ungenerous defence," said she, "and so old and time-worn that I wonder you are not ashamed to bring it out this cool evening. I think Adam used it to Eve before she took the bite of that apple, and it has been 'ladies' fruit' ever since."

"Fairly defeated now, Lieutenant Dallam, whatever we were before," said the first speaker. "I think we might as well acknowledge it and withdraw our forces; many a poor fellow is killed by a chance shot after the battle is over."

"Well, I don't know," was the answer, with mock gallantry, "that I do not court a wound from such a source. Miss Holcombe always sends the cure in with

the bullet which wounds; she administers her blow with a smile which makes it after all a *coup-de-grace*. Ah, Mrs. Murray," turning towards the second lady, who with her escort now rode up, "your sister here is invincible, she wins the laurels on every field."

"She'll win a broken neck, I fear, Lieutenant Dallam," said the lady, rather tartly. "Mary forgets that it is not exactly the thing for her to be tearing over the country at such a pace, running races with gentlemen. Papa would not approve of it, I am sure."

The speaker was a queenly-looking woman, with beauty still untouched though matured by time. There was a dignity of manner which harmonized so admirably with her appearance that you almost forgave her the unnecessary tartness of her rebuke, because you felt that the freak which provoked it, though harmless enough, would have sat strangely upon the rebuker.

"Rather harsh, Margie," said the gentleman who accompanied her, assisting her to dismount with a familiarity which at once proclaimed their relation to be that of husband and wife; "I shall have to turn against my wife in this case. Mary has not violated any rule of propriety that I know of; and if she never loses her life until she is thrown from her horse, I will insure her a long one. She is rather more at home on horseback than off of it. She might 'jine the cavalry,' as the boys say, with credit."

A momentary expression of vexation crossed Margaret Murray's face at the opposition, but it was voiceless, and passed away as she felt the caressing touch of his hand upon her shoulder, and met that expression which took the sting from his rebuke; at the same moment also a negro woman appeared at the top of the

steps leading down to where they stood, bearing in her arms a perfect representative of beautiful babyhood, laughing and exulting as he caught sight of the party, reaching forward eagerly towards them and crying in his baby accents:

"Mama! Mama!"

In an instant all else was forgotten, and the queenly creature was nothing more than a simple woman crowned with her triple glory, woman, wife, mother, extending her arms upwards, exclaiming:

"My beautiful boy! my darling!"

It was a pretty sight to see her with the baby in her arms, nestling closely to her bosom, with his little hands clasped tightly about her neck, and his dimpled cheek resting against her own; it told a whole volume in a moment.

"Will Miss Mary Holcombe be so good as to inform me why she never has a word for an old friend and preceptor, allowing these young fellows to monopolize her completely?" said one of the gentlemen who had accompanied Mary, as he assisted her in the difficult task of ascending the steps, incommoded as she was by her long riding-skirt; "I am sure I have a prior claim to any other gentleman of your acquaintance."

"Indeed you have, Mr. Williams," said Mary, putting her hand familiarly upon his arm—"a claim which none of them can ever have. Of course you know I can never value any other friend as I do you."

"Then why not give me some proof of it?" was the answer, not without a tone of irritation in the voice.

"Well, Mr. Williams, how can I help it? I am obliged to play the agreeable to these boys when they come to the house, and you are just as well satisfied with Mamma and Margie."

"Perhaps so," answered Mr. Williams under his breath, adding aloud: "Well, I intend to claim my rights from this time out. I put myself upon a footing with the other visitors, and insist that Miss Holcombe shall at least show me equal attention. If a man can't claim something upon the score of having brought you up, I think matters are come to a strange pass."

"Very well, take what you can get," said Mary, laughing saucily, "if you won't be content with what I offer you."

As they approached the house they were met by a little boy about four years old riding on a stick horse.

"Well, Master Eddy, how d'ye do?" said Mr. Williams, catching him up and holding him at arm's length above his head.

"I will be dead, dat's how I do, if you don't put me down," was the answer, the little face swelling with mingled indignation and apprehension at the indignity. "I verily b'leves you is a Yankee," he continued, glowering at his persecutor as he was reinstated upon his feet.

"You do?" said Mr. Williams in pretended astonishment; "what makes you think that?"

"Tause Federates don't do dat way to boys; dey 'members dey was little boys once theyselves."

"Well, were not Yankees little boys too?" demanded his interlocutor.

"No, of tourse not," with a glance of supreme contempt for the ignorance which could dictate such a question; "how tould dey be when dey ain't dot no *movvers?*"

"The one fact in Natural History conceded, the other follows of course," said Mr. Murray.

"Never mind, young man," said Mr. Dallam; "when the Yankees come they won't let you talk that way about them."

"Dey better not tum, if dey knows what is dood for dem," delivered with the fierceness of six feet three inches.

"Why, what could you do?"

"I reckon I've dot a dun; I will shoot 'em every one, and den dey will run in a jippy." And the miniature man strutted up and down the portico with the swelling confidence of six of his sex.

"You funny baby, you!" said Mary, catching him up as he passed her and kissing his cheek over and over again.

"Put me down," said the child passionately; "I ain't no baby. You don't know anysin about it. You is jist a gall; you tan't fight."

"Asserting the superiority of his sex already," said Mary, laughing.

"Which you deny, I suppose," said Lieutenant Dallam, lazily lounging against the railing.

"Not with such evidence against me," said Mary, extending her vision so as to take in the whole company and ending with the speaker.

"What do you think?" she added, turning to Mr. Williams, who stood beside her.

"Who, I?" elevating his eyebrows; "I feel as if I was in a debating society discussing the relative merits of the cow and the horse — as if such a question could be discusesd."

"No, but," persisted Mary, "I want you to say, really."

"Well if you insist upon the debate's proceeding, I

think the world would be right badly off without either one. It is impossible to assert the superiority of either, because their spheres are so different. A man descends in his scale as he becomes effeminate, and a woman in hers when she becomes masculine; they can each be Godlike in their way when they live up to the image in which they were made, and they can each be devilish in their way when they don't. That man is a fool who is continually harping upon the inferiority of the opposite sex; and the woman is worse who, whatever just claim she may have to it, is always asserting either her equality or her superiority to the man."

"I only meant comparison in mental qualifications, Mr. Williams," said Mary, blushing as deeply as if she had laid herself open to his denunciations.

"Well, there too there can be no comparison. Some men are superior to some women — I pity them if they are not! — and some women are superior to some men; God help them if they are not! What is the use of discussing these matters? God has given you and me our separate spheres. Let us try to fill them fully and well; *that* is our business."

"I know you are right," said Mary, "but indeed I think you are a little harsh."

"Forgive me if I am," he said, smiling down at her with an apology in every lineament of his face; "nothing is farther from my intention. I always feel so strongly that I am apt to express myself with greater vim than I intend; but remember you got up the debating society yourself."

"In which," drawled Lieutenant Dallam, who was the only other member of the original party left, "it seems to me you not only took both sides but decided

the question on a common ground — all out of order, and I call for a further discussion of the question, and second my own motion. All in favor of this motion will say Yea! all opposed No!

His faint Yea scarce made any noise beside the vociferous Noes of the other two.

"The question can with great propriety be laid on the table, as Robin has three times announced tea," said Mary, leading the way into the house.

CHAPTER VI.

"The proper study of mankind is man."—POPE.

"LIEUTENANT DALLAM, Mr. Williams and myself propose making a reconnoissance to-day as far as Hawk's Nest. We will be very glad to have your company if you wish to go."

"How far is it?" asked that gentleman, rising from the most luxurious chair the library at Rose Hill afforded, in which he had been lounging at his ease, intent upon the contents of a book he held in his hand.

There was an indolent nonchalance and languid indifference in his manner of presenting this query which, while it could scarce be called ungallant, and was an inseparable characteristic of the man, yet to one who like Miss Holcombe had been accustomed to receive the glad acquiescence of the other sex in any proposition of hers which promised her society as one of the ingredients, it was to say the least not flattering, and that she so regarded it was easily discerned from the irritated flush which mounted to her face as she half turned towards the door.

"It is about four miles off, but as we go to revive some old and pleasant associations I dare say it would bore you; indeed I only came because I feared you would feel neglected if we went without telling you, but I see I might have spared myself the trouble — we would not have been missed even. You have *The Last of the Barons*, and we could not hope to rival Sibyl Warner."

Mr. Dallam smiled a quick amused smile as he thought, "No end to the variety of her expressions; this pique positively renders her charming." He said aloud:

"I am sorry that it was only your sense of duty as a hostess which led to the compliment, because I am so anxious to go; and as to poor little Sibyl Warner, I assure you I feel no more difficulty in leaving her than Lord Hastings did. She is too unreal to rival Miss Holcombe; but I confess I should enjoy a ride *tête-à-tête* much more. Can't we dispense with pedagogus?"

"Mr. Dallam," said Mary, "I have told you over and over again that I do not want you to call Mr. Williams names; he is a dear and valued friend to me, and it is positively displeasing to me for you to speak of him as you do."

"Beautiful!" said Mr. Dallam, under his breath, studying the changing face with the keenness of a practised artist, "positively radiant!"

"Well, my dear young lady, I beg your ten thousand pardons; I never meant to offend, I assure you. I have the highest respect and esteem for your dear old nurse."

"Mr. Dallam!" and this time she reached the door.

"Stop! stop!" said the gentleman, reaching her side and putting his hand on the door — "stop and forgive me. I know it is very impertinent in me, but you bear teasing so charmingly that for my life I cannot resist the temptation sometimes."

"Mr. Dallam, please let me go."

"Miss Holcombe, please let me go —— I will release you if you choose, but won't you let me form one of your riding-party?" He had managed to exchange his former manner for one sufficiently earnest to satisfy

the young lady, and when she turned towards him he found from her face, that there was no longer danger of dire anger, so he not only withdrew his detaining hand from the door but opened it wide, and then repeated his request with an assumption of humility which brought the dimpling smile to Mary Holcombe's face.

"May I go with you to-day? You will not believe how really anxious I am to make one of the party to Owl's Nest."

"Hawk's Nest," corrected Mary, laughing.

"Well, I don't care what kind of nest it is, but I do want to go. May I?"

"Of course, if you choose; but I would like to see sometimes that you anticipate some pleasure in a proposition of mine. And then too I hate you when you talk so of Mr. Williams."

"My dear Miss Holcombe! I know you don't mean it, but don't say it in joke even. I will love Mr. Williams with my whole heart if you will only return it in kind, and he is a dear old Dominie Sampson. Now, don't resent that too! Goodness, what am I to do? I think that is the highest compliment I could pay to any one. Let's drop the Captain; he is evidently the rock upon which I am doomed to split. What time do you start?"

"In half an hour," said Mary; "but again, I beg you will not go unless you really wish it."

"I assure you that I am perfectly enthusiastic about it; but you ought to make allowance for my manner: I am a Stoic in manner but not in feeling. Now, although you see me so calm and unconcerned, I am really very much excited about this same trip."

"Certainly," said Mary, laughing with restored good humor, "I do not think any one would ever accuse you of undue excitement. I actually believe, Lieutenant Dallam, that if it were announced at the door that the Yankees were within twenty yards of the house, that you would get up with the greatest deliberation, return your book to its proper position on the shelf, taking care that it was perfectly in place; which matter settled satisfactorily, you would stop to sigh over the absolute necessity for exertion, and perhaps take an elaborate leave of every member of the family before you attempted to make your escape."

"Miss Holcombe, what injustice!" said Lieutenant Dallam, in pretended indignation. "Why, I am the soul of energy!"

"I am glad you told me; I certainly never should have suspected it. I know you manage to provoke me excessively by an adroit concealment of it very often."

"Is it possible? What a misfortune! You give me an incentive for reforming at once. From this time"—with a melodramatic manner—"you see a new man."

"Well, I hope the new man will be ready when the horses make their appearance," said Mary, laughing. "If you keep us waiting we withdraw our invitation. Now, remember!" and she left the room.

The "new man" tossed his book upon the table as he said, "I declare she is the most charming piece of creation I ever encountered. Her expression is no two seconds the same; it varies like the shifting clouds of the sky. I wonder if—— I don't like the influence of this Williams over her. I am half afraid he has some sneaking notion of her himself; but I flatter myself——" Here

he glanced at the mirror opposite, adjusted his cravat, and left the rest of his sentence unfinished.

We do not like to venture to interpret a man's thoughts — they are his own private property, and no stranger has a right to intermeddle with them; but surely Lieutenant Dallam might have built some self-flattery upon the reflection which the mirror threw back to his gaze.

A figure rather above the medium height, straight, muscular, and well-proportioned, set off by the full Confederate uniform, than which there could be no more becoming dress, but which he did not at all need to make conspicuous the striking characteristics of manly beauty which his appearance presented. His face was delicate and brilliant, with features regular and fair as a girl's, and yet with no touch of effeminacy; had there been any symptom of this, it would have been set at naught by the moustache which arched around his full lips, and the beard which, like most of the Confederates, he wore long. His hair was soft, silky and curling, and of a bright chestnut color; and there was a languid, nonchalant manner, with a slight touch of plaintive sadness, when not engaged in animated conversation, which appealed to the interest of his acquaintances. Indeed, it was a curious fact that although it took a good deal at times to awaken him to any great degree of interest in what was going on, yet when the change came it rewarded the effort, and he at once became brilliant and instinct with fire.

It was this which had awakened an interest for him in Miss Holcombe's mind.

He had returned to Rose Hill with John after the battle of Manassas, to recruit with him from the effects

of a slight wound. It fell to Mary's lot to make the time of their convalescence as pleasant as it might be; and there was no holiday-time during the war like one of those easy convalescences at a luxurious country house, where the inmates were ready enough to invest you in a heroic garb, and where the suffering was a mere idea.

Nor was it an unpleasant task to the young lady herself. She had but to consult her own pleasure and it was sure to be theirs; so that it is no wonder that the three weeks' leave for the young soldiers was remembered as a gleam of sunlight amid the clouds of hardship they had daily to encounter.

They were the first wounded soldiers Mary had seen, and she attributed Mr. Dallam's languid nonchalance of manner to the effects of his wound; but as she knew him better it often irritated her, and, though unconsciously to herself, there grew to be a fascination in the effort to rouse him from his lethargy, to produce one of those lightning changes which were so rare and so attractive. Nor was she apt to fail in her attempts; they had many things in common in their tastes and feelings, for simple girl as she was, there were few young ladies of her age who were better acquainted with the world of ideas than Mary Holcombe. She had been nurtured in the country among literary people, and her tastes had been rarely cultivated.

There was in fact a wonderful harmony between the appearance and character of this young girl. Her beauty was of the most delicate and refined type; thoroughbred in everything, she was also thoroughly feminine in everything. Where Margaret would have challenged admiration by braving a danger, Mary would have ex-

cited tenderness by her gentle timidity. She was, in short, one of those gracefully dependent creatures who so powerfully excite the warmer feelings of the other sex, from their evident inferiority to themselves in those sterner virtues which are man's special prerogative, and their dependence upon them for that tenderness and protection which it is always so sweet to man in his strength to extend to woman in her weakness. The lords of creation like to feel their sovereignty and to have it acknowledged, though they are very generous in the exercise of it.

In harmony with this characteristic, Mary Holcombe possessed all of the more delicate and refined tastes and endowments which adorn our nature; and a love for music amounting almost to a passion, a voice which was as sweet and variable as a bird's, and not without a plaintive note in it, which made it easy to turn from the glad song which danced upon the ear like the note of Nature's sweet songsters, to the soft sad strain which brings the tear to the eye unbidden; a love for the beauties of Nature, which is ever the evidence of an artistic eye, as susceptible of impressions from this source as if only freshly ushered into this great garden-spot of our Maker, where He spreads out before us the works of His hand in all their grand variety and their exquisite delicacy. A view of the more rugged and stronger workings of His hand filled her with silent awe, and her touch of a flower was as caressing as if the pretty thing were endowed with life; to see one perishing from neglect was pain to her, and although she always had them blooming about her, a rose in her hair or a lily in her bosom, as soon as they began to hang their heads they were transferred to their life-giving element, and fresher ones took their places.

You naturally associated her with the flowers, Longfellow prettily describes his Evangeline: "When she passed, it was like the ceasing of exquisite music." And when Mary Holcombe passed, it was as if we had parted with the odor of a delicate flower. She was "like an exquisite song set to sweet music," with no jarring or discordant note about her.

As their acquaintance progressed, Mr. Dallam had been surprised to find that underneath the sparkle and effervescence which made her so attractive, there was a substratum of more solid material, which would last after youth with its brightness had passed; and his interest extended and deepened as he strove to sound the depths of her nature — a dangerous game where untrammeled youthful hearts are the gamesters; but when he found that the study had but riveted the chains about him, he shook them in triumph at the rosy bondage, and with all the confidence of youth and self-appreciation resolved to win the prize from fate.

He had much on his side, it was true, and appreciated his advantages at the highest.

When Mary Holcombe made her appearance at the door, she found the "soul of energy" extended on a lounge in a luxurious abandonment to perfect rest, engaged in a reverie.

"Is this the way you reform? said she. "Not one preparation have you made for the ride, and the horses are at the door."

She was dressed in a dark blue riding-habit, which displayed most becomingly her softly-rounded figure; her hair was unconfined and fell in all of its luxuriant beauty around her, and from her little brimless riding-hat depended a long white ostrich feather.

"No preparation necessary for a good soldier, my dear young lady," said Mr. Dallam, rising; "he is always ready for the invasion of the enemy."

"Enemy indeed!" retorted Mary — "a pretty compliment you pay us, I must say."

"Truths are not always pleasant," was the answer; "but you cannot deny that you are the most dangerous enemies our sex can have."

"Well, admitting it for the sake of the argument," said Mary, saucily, "we are enemies you would be very unwilling to do without."

"Admitted freely; that is just the point. You destroy our peace, and still we court the destruction; you fill us with vague tortures, which we would not escape if we could; in short, you make us miserable, and we like it."

Mary laughed as she answered, "It is always the most impenetrable of your sex that indulge most in these desperately gallant speeches, and it is the more absurd in you because you don't even exert yourself to look in earnest; you bear as little resemblance to an injured man as any one I ever saw."

"The surface of the lake is smooth enough until it is stirred by the storm," said Mr. Dallam, as they joined Mr. Williams on the porch.

"Let me see, young lady, if you are sufficiently prepared for the cool evening we must encounter as we return," said Mr. Williams. "Ah no; you must get a shawl."

"A shawl indeed!" said Mary, "I never burden myself with any such inconveniences. Why, it is as warm as summer."

"So it is now, but October evenings are always

chilly. Go, child, and get your shawl; I'll carry it for you."

He spoke with the familiarity of a brother, or even a father, and Mary was starting off to obey when Lieutenant Dallam arrested her by a low laugh full of meaning.

"What do you mean?" she said, stopping between the two gentlemen.

"Nothing," said he, elevating his eyebrows, "except that you are very well secured in leading strings. I shall take lessons from Captain Williams in the art of ruling; he commands like a General."

"And you, my friend, prefer a masked battery to an open battle-field," retorted Mr. Williams calmly; and seeing Mary hesitate, he walked off to the house, and in a moment returned with a shawl, of which he kept possession without more words.

"Mary," said Mrs. Murray, coming from the house as the party were about to ride off, "please take these keys with you, and make Sarah get out what the servants want. Tell her that Mr. Murray and myself will ride over in a day or two."

A ride of a few miles through the woods brought them in sight of a pretty cottage building, nestling in its bower of green.

"There is Margie's home," said Mary, pointing with her whip towards it.

"A decided improvement on our old farm-house," said Mr. Williams; "but I don't like even that change. I wanted to see it just as it used to be."

"There is Hawk's Nest unchanged," said Mary, pointing to a rock which seemed to lean perilously over their heads from the mountain-side.

"Yes, Nature is our only unchanging friend; nothing else resists the impertinent encroachments of time," said Mr. Williams.

"Ah, Mr. Williams," said Mary, "people who are growing old always talk bitterly of time. Now I think of time as the maturer; you, as the destroyer."

"I believe you look upon me as a perfect Methuselah," said Mr. Williams laughing, though his countenance expressed some annoyance.

"Well, if I do, I like old people better than I do young ones," said Mary, consolingly.

"What a pity Captain Murray had to leave so sweet a home!" said Mr. Dallam, as they drew up in front of the vine-clad porch; "it looks like a nest for a pair of young birds.'"

"Yes, Margie hated it dreadfully, but Captain Murray left it to her decision whether or not he should go into the army, and she decided for it. "Well, Uncle Billy," to an old negro man who now made his appearance at the head of her horse.

"Sarvant, Misstis," said the old man, bowing very low before her; "I hopes my young misstis and marster is well."

"Yes, and will be over soon. How are you all getting along?"

"Poor enuf, Miss Mary. De soldiers won't leave nothin' on de place by de time dey is done; it rayly is shameful de way dey dus take de chickens."

"Bad account to give of Confederate soldiers," said Mary laughing, as the gentlemen assisted her to dismount.

"But very true, as I know," said Captain Williams. "If this war lasts much longer honesty will have fled the land; the disregard of property rights is dreadful."

"Well, you can hardly blame the poor fellows," said Mr. Dallam; "they look upon these things as their rights. Theirs is a life of terrible hardship, and they are right to take what they can get."

"Rather loose reasoning, I must say," said Captain Williams. "I would not give much for an army disciplined according to such ideas."

"Well," said Mr. Dallam, "I never take any notice when I see them with extra delicacies which are not issued from our Commissariat. I am too fond of creature comforts myself not to feel for them."

By this time the servants had opened the house, and they entered the neat little parlor, bearing the marks of the dainty taste of its mistress. Many of the more delicate adornments of the room had been removed, but enough remained to retain for it its air of habitable comfort.

"'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more,"

quoted Mr. Dallam. "I declare I should never have decided as Mrs. Murray did. He was certainly exempt, being a foreigner."

"Well, if he was exempt on his own account," said Mary, "he was willing to fight for his wife and for his home. I don't think any man who has a home in Virginia can claim exemption from the obligation to espouse her cause."

"You are right," said Mr. Williams; "but I would make her cause the cause of the whole South. Virginia does not stand alone."

"Of course not, Mr. Williams; but my strongest feeling is for my State."

"Yes, but I think Virginians are apt to carry that feeling too far; they exalt their State at the expense

of all of the others. They are laughed at all over the country for it. No one is prouder of the record of Virginia than I am, but I think it would be wisest and best not to parade our pride on all occasions."

"Consider yourself reproved, Miss Holcombe," said Mr. Dallam, laughing. "Captain Williams has not forgotten how to play the pedagogue yet."

Mary's face flushed at the insinuation, and Captain Williams answered hotly:

"Mr. Dallam seems determined to give a wrong coloring to my remarks this morning. I beg to be permitted to write my own commentaries."

Mr. Dallam murmured something about "no offence intended," of which Mr. Williams took no notice, and Mary proposed that they should adjourn with her to the store-room, as she had to attend to some little matters for her sister.

Both gentlemen were amused at the self-importance of the little Regent as she flitted about in the discharge of her duties, with her long riding-dress swung over her arm, adorning the position if not quite filling it.

"Now, Sarah," said Mary, "Margie said you were to get out whatever the people would want until she came over."

"I wish Miss Margie would come 'long home and 'tend to her house," said Sarah sullenly. "If she don't take keer she won't have none to 'tend to after awhile," and Sarah filled her tray from the corn-meal barrel by jerks, expressive of her irate feelings.

"Oh! not so bad as that, I hope," said Mary in a conciliatory tone. "Do the soldiers trouble you too?"

"Trouble!" and Sarah looked up from the monster piece of middling she was cutting—"why, dey jes

comes in and take what they wants, widout troublin' any body much — dat is, to give they leave."

"But don't they pay for it?" asked Captain Williams.

"Oh yes, sir, dey pays for it; but you can't eat money, and dey don't leave you nothin' else to eat. I wouldn't mind, but when de white folks comes dey is sure to say niggar steal it all. You Jane! if you don't keep out of my way I'll take somethin' and knock you over." This last threat was administered to a child of some two years old who was clinging to her dress. "Dare, set whar I tell you; don't you move agin," and she took the offender by the arm and set her down very hard on a chair on the other side of the room.

Sarah was a tall, fine-looking mulatto, powerfully made, and with a less pleasant expression of face and manner than was usual with her race; for though they, as a race, are extremely passionate in temper, retaining in some degree the elements of the savage in their treatment of their children, yet the impulse of passion is soon over, and they are for the most part respectful and amiable in their deportment to their superiors.

"Why, Sarah," said Mary, in a tone of gentle reproof, "you are not giving us a very hospitable reception this morning. Captain Murray will not be very much pleased when I tell him how cross you were."

"Well, Miss Mary," said the woman, in an apologetic tone, "I beg you pardon. But rayly dese solgers dus keep a body so rumbunkcious all de time dat I hardly knows what I is sayin'. Ef you and the gent'men will walk in de parlor I will have you some nice coffee in a minnit."

The invitation was declined for the present, as they wished to prosecute their ride to Hawk's Nest; but the promise to return was given, when Sarah proposed to make amends for her churlishness.

It was no easy matter for our equestrians to make their way up the mountain. The foot-path was utterly impracticable, but they found by going round for some distance and making a gradual approach they were able to attain the object of their desires. At length they stood at the foot of the immense boulder of rock which they had seen hanging far above their heads a few minutes since, and which reared itself from the very summit of the peak. They stood at a great height above the plain, and commanded a view of the whole country for miles around, spreading itself before them like a vast panorama bounded everywhere by mountains. The peak upon which they stood seemed to constitute in some sort a centre in the landscape, to which bounteous Nature lavishly supplied cliffs, defiles, and ravines, with clear spots of luxurious field, white farm-houses and pretty villages, with the mountain stream winding in and out, now dashing in a waterfall, and now flowing like a luminous serpent as quietly as if its surface had never known a ruffle.

"There is Rose Hill," said Mary, pointing to a clump of variegated trees which almost concealed the house; 'and down here Margie's cottage looks like a baby-house. Why are you looking so earnestly at me, Mr. Williams?"

"I was just thinking how little you had changed except in stature since we stood here before. I don't think you are really less of a child than when you stood on that point of rock to have your picture taken. I wonder if you could not climb to the pinnacle as actively as you did then."

"Not encumbered with a riding-dress," said Mary, laughing; "though without that I don't know that I would require much urging."

"Suppose we try it on horseback," said Mr. Dallam. "I will lead your horse and ensure your safety."

Mary looked around in surprise at the daring proposition, and Captain Williams said:

"Surely Lieutenant Dallam is joking; he would not propose so perilous an enterprise to a young lady under his care."

"I do not consider it at all perilous to any one who rides as well as Miss Holcombe; and if she will submit to my guidance I will place her in safety at the top of that rock. You know, my dear young lady," said Mr. Dallam, turning to Mary, "that I would be the last person in the world to propose your doing anything by which you could receive injury, and in this case I have no fears for the result."

Mary hesitated; she saw with surprise that he was more interested in this than she had ever known him in so trivial a matter, and it passed through her mind that she was willing even to overcome her timidity to gratify him. Mr. Williams, too, presumed a little upon his former position of authority; it would not be amiss to give him a lesson.

"I have half a mind to go," said she, turning to Mr. Dallam, whose eyes flashed with positive excitement as he spurred his horse forward to take her rein, in which he was prevented by Mr. Williams, who interposed himself between them, and without looking towards the gentleman, said to Mary:

"Excuse me, child, but you are under my care to-day, as I first asked you to take this ride with *me*, and

I shall not permit you to go upon any such mad expedition."

"Captain Williams presumes upon his old friendship too much," said Mary, the hot blood surging up to her cheeks; "he forgets that I am no longer a child. I shall have to remind him of the fact by doing as I please in this matter. Lieutenant Dallam, I am ready."

Perhaps she was right, and Captain Williams never had realised the fact before, for both tone and manner had changed when he spoke again. Though there was no change of purpose indicated in either, there was nothing of the arbitrary enforcement of it.

"Mary Holcombe," he said, in a tone of entreaty, "by the past and the future I do beg that you will not persist in this reckless expedition, the prosecution of which is as foreign to your taste and nature as it can be. If you were to be seized with a dizziness, or your horse were to make a misstep, nothing could save you."

She, so easily influenced, and as he had said naturally so timid, half yielded to his earnestness, which moved her at once. But Mr. Dallam moving forward, said, his eyes still gleaming with unusual excitement:

"Captain Williams, I will not submit to this interference. Miss Holcombe has a right to make choice of her guide; she has voluntarily chosen me, and with your permission I will assume my position."

He might as well not have spoken, for the notice which Captain Williams took of his words. Still with his eyes fixed on Mary, he repeated it as though it were necessary to keep it before her:

"By all that you remember in the past, by all we hope for in the future, do not persist!"

"There is no danger, Mr. Williams," said Mary, with

painful indecision of manner, looking first at one and then the other. But Mr. Williams saw that she only wanted some one to make the decision for her; so leading her horse forward, without another word he proceeded past Mr. Dallam down the mountain road. This the latter gentleman would have prevented if Mary had not said to him:

"Don't, Mr. Dallam; I dare say it is best. Please don't make a difficulty;" and to reconcile him to his disappointment, she bestowed upon him her sweetest smiles and kindest words, in utter forgetfulness of the stern-looking man with compressed lips and cheek pale with feeling who kept his hand still upon her bridle rein, but did not utter a word until they reached the plain at the foot of the mountain, when releasing his hold upon her rein he said:

"I will not ask you to forgive me now; I feel that it would be useless. I am willing to wait for a calmer moment for my vindication. Nor will I ask you to promise me not to persist in your mad enterprise; in the first place I think that even now you are glad you were prevented, and next I do not believe that you will deliberately do what I earnestly advise and request that you will not. In the meantime I will ride on home, as it is best for all that the party as a party should be broken up." And lifting his cap from his head he bowed low in his saddle to Mary, and without taking any notice of her companion rode rapidly away.

"It reminds me," said Mr. Dallam, "of children at play. Your friend is sulky and declines to play any more."

Mary did not laugh as usual; her eyes were fixed on the retreating form of her friend, now fast disappearing

in the distance, and her expression showed plainly the regret she was experiencing. Mr. Dallam noted the signs of the times and hastened to arouse that opposition which pride makes inherent in her sex.

"I am sorry, but I really think the gentleman takes too much on himself, and the lesson will do him good. I have often thought in your amiable attachment to him that you allowed him too much authority."

Still Mary kept her eye fixed on the retreating figure and said nothing either good or bad; until finding it necessary to break the silence, grown irksome and embarrassing from its length, her companion ventured to say:

"Suppose we return and finish our expedition, since your self-elected guardian has left us to our own devices."

Slowly the truant eyes turned towards him, as if it required an effort for the young lady to come back to the present in which he formed a part. In an instant, recalled to herself, she caught up the reins of her horse, and riding towards the little cottage, said:

"We have been very foolish and wrong, Mr. Dallam; and I shall tell Captain Williams so, as soon as we get home. He is too old, tried and true a friend to resign for a trifle; and besides, I am glad he stopped us."

CHAPTER VII.

"She is a woman, therefore may be woo'd;
She is a woman, therefore may be won;
She is Lavinia, therefore must be loved." — SHAKSPEARE.

"MAMMA, may I come in?" said Mary Holcombe, knocking at Mrs. Holcombe's door on the evening of the expedition to Hawk's Nest.

"Certainly, daughter," answered a gentle voice, and Mary found her with her sweet smile of welcome, sitting before a bright fire, half ready for bed, as she had thrown on a blue dressing-wrapper and was brushing her long light hair, which fell around her person, giving an additional softness to a face whose chief charm at all times lay in the sweet refinement and gentleness of its expression.

Mary's first action was very childish, as she knelt before her mother, and putting her arms about her waist, hid her face in her bosom. Something in the action combined with the embarrassed flush upon her cheek, revealed the fact to Mrs. Holcombe that something more than ordinary had occurred to prompt this visit.

Laying aside the brush, she put her hand upon the bowed head, and turning back her face kissed the lips now smiling up at her.

"Come for confession, little girl?" said she, smiling encouragingly; "what is the trouble? You know I am a very good receptacle for such commodities."

The only answer was a little change of position,

which removed the encircling arms from her waist and placed them around Mrs. Holcombe's neck, and that lady was surprised to feel the hot tears falling heavily on her neck.

"Why, my child," she said in alarm, "this is something serious; you do not often cry. Tell me what is the trouble."

"No trouble at all, I suppose, Mamma," said Mary, laughing through her tears; "but I am just a little nervous about telling you."

"Telling me about what?" was the query as she put her arms around the kneeling figure and tried again to get a sight of the hidden face.

"Well, Mamma, about our ride to-day."

"What about it; was it more than an ordinary ride?"

"Oh yes, a great deal more. In the first place I behaved very badly, and vexed poor Mr. Williams — I never can remember to call him Captain; and he rode off home by himself, and left Mr. Dallam with me."

"Oh, I am sorry," said Mrs. Holcombe, thinking she had grasped the whole mystery. "But he is so good he will not remember it after you have told him you are sorry."

"Oh, I know that he is the best friend in the world; but that is not all."

Mrs. Holcombe waited in silence further developments; they came but slowly.

"Mr. Dallam stayed with me," and the head was raised, but not the eyes, which were busy looking down in her mother's lap for something which promised to be hard to find.

"Well, Mr. Dallam stayed with you,' repeated Mrs. Holcombes. "Did you make him angry too?"

"Oh no! not at all. I believe he likes me very much. Mamma! Mamma! that is it; he says he loves me dearly, and I have promised to try to — to — you know what; and if Papa, and you, and Margie, and brother, and all, think it is not absurd for me to talk about such things. You know I am eighteen, Mamma, but such a silly child; and it seems so strange for such a man to care about me so much."

"I don't think so at all," said Mrs. Holcombe, trying to repress a smile; "it is the very natural consequence of his being thrown with you. But do you love him? you can't marry him just because he loves you."

"Yes, I think I do; indeed I know I do. And he loves me so dearly! And, Mamma, he told me to-day all about himself; he has had so much trouble, and has endured so much for our cause."

"What more than others?"

"Well, you know he is a Virginian by birth, but was living in Atlanta at the time the war broke out. Of course he enlisted at once, and was elected Lieutenant. What was his surprise and sorrow, then, to receive a letter from his father here in Virginia telling him to come on and join him, as he had removed all of his property to the North, and should remove there himself as soon as his son made their family complete. Mr. Dallam wrote at once, most earnestly remonstrating with him, and saying that in any event he should cast in his fortunes with the South. His father was very angry, and even went down to Atlanta to use his personal influence; and when he found it was all useless he told him that he should disinherit him, and left him. Since then he has never heard even from his mother or sister, and I know that is what so often makes him look so

sad when he is in his quiet moods. Oh, Mamma, I never will tease him again! I feel so sorry for him."

Mrs. Holcombe smiled; she had not forgotten her youth, and could sympathise with this ardent child. But she said:

"Well, dear, you know I have nothing to do with the arranging of these affairs; it all rests with Papa. Of course you could not enter into any engagement without his consent, and I want you to prepare yourself for disappointment, as I feel sure it will not be lightly given."

"Mamma!" exclaimed Mary, with an accent of alarm, "you don't think he could find anything to object to in Mr. Dallam, do you?"

"I don't know, dear; you know that beyond our acquaintance with him in this house we know literally nothing of him, except what he himself tells us."

"Yes, but, Mamma, of course what he says is true."

"I have no reason for doubting it, my darling, but still I cannot answer for Papa. He will do what is best for all parties; we both feel that, I am sure."

"Yes, of course; but oh, Mamma, I thought that I could go to him and tell him that it was all right. I know that he will be so disappointed! and I never want him to connect the idea of trouble or disappointment with me in any way, because he has had so much already, and I want to make everything bright to him."

Mrs. Holcombe smiled as she said:

"You have developed from a child into a woman in a few hours, daughter. Truly, it takes but a touch of this mysterious influence upon the heart, and the child is gone forever." She spoke rather to herself than to her companion, and her tone was almost regretful that

the sweet flower of girlhood should have dropped thus unexpectedly. Then seeing Mary's eyes fixed on her with anxiety, she kissed her and said:

"There, dear, go, if Mr. Dallam is waiting for you: Tell him what I say, that of course you are nothing to each other until Papa gives his consent."

Mary rose reluctantly, feeling as if she were about to inflict a wound upon her lover by the news of this delay, and was quite relieved when he laughed at her serious face.

"Why, birdie, it is nothing but the delay of a day. I shall go to Manassas to-morrow, and be back here to-morrow night with full authority to claim you. I don't feel as if anything in this world could ever break the tie between us, now that you have spoken the word — thank God for it!"

"But oh, suppose Papa should object!"

"Object to what?" he said, contracting his brows. "I challenge investigation in every particular; my record is an open one. You are mine! mine! mine!"

She had never seen him so transformed as he was to-night. The man was at his best, radiant, triumphant; and yet even now, glowing as he was, a keen physiognomist would have pointed to the mouth with its full lips, and pronounced it indicative of weakness and vacillation, a blot upon the fair surface unerasable.

But Mary Holcombe was no physiognomist, and life looked very bright to her through this bright medium, and her heart rose and swelled with his enthusiasm; and even while her maidenly reserve kept her voice silent, her heart echoed that triumphant cry of his as she looked at him in his glorious beauty, and responded, "Mine! mine! mine!"

The next morning early he was off to Manassas, but not too early for him to be able to wave a last farewell to that youthful figure looking after him from the porch; and no one would have accused him of nonchalance or indifference as he sped onward, that he might the sooner return to the goal of his hopes.

On the afternoon of this same day, Mary Holcombe, quite by accident *of course*, walked down to the grove, book in hand, and seated herself in "Margaret's Grotto." Quite as much by accident, she did not seem at all anxious to possess herself of the contents of this same book, as it lay unnoticed on her lap, while her hand supported her head, and out of her eyes looked a new expression — a dreamy light very different from anything we have seen there heretofore, and a dewy brightness like the sun shining upon the morning moisture.

The wind stirred softly the foliage of the trees, though ever and anon Nature, as if impatient at the stillness, would breathe a deeper breath through the grove; and the fair girl, starting at the added motion, would listen intently for some expected sound, until her cheek, catching the excitement, changed its hue from the soft rose to the glow which pervades the innermost seed of the pomegranate; and finally, as if wearied with this continual call for motion, advancing and receding, which her nerves required, the blood remained in her cheek, flushing it permanently to a deeper hue than usual, though without rejecting the increasing demand upon it, which demand was made when the unmistakable sound of horses' hoofs, striking regularly and quickly upon the hard road, and approaching nearer and nearer, broke upon the stillness. And when

the young girl rose from her rustic seat and approached the entrance to the grotto, which commanded a view of the road for some distance, her brow and delicate throat partook of the same sanguine hue. The one moment which elapsed, however, before the sound which had aroused her resulted in anything tangible, enabled her to command back this unruly tide, and to establish the mastery over her forces, and to all appearance she was a very quiet and composed gazer down the road upon which appeared horse and rider. Nor was she very much surprised or even disappointed to find in the latter her returning lover. The soft hue of her dress and her stillness blended her so perfectly with surrounding objects that he but saw her as a little piece of inanimate nature, until he was close upon her, when, looking up, he caught her waiting glance and smile of welcome. In that moment her quick eye had marked with a sinking heart his moody sadness of expression, which, however, fled in an instant with his exclamation of pleasure at sight of her; and there was little of his old indolent nonchalance left as he leaped from his horse and hurried towards her.

"This is more than I had dared hope," he said; "and did you really come out to meet me?"

"Oh no, of course not," was the blushing answer, though her compromise with truth was atoned for by a laugh, as if she did not half want him to believe her after all; "I was reading, and came here for quiet and meditation," and she held up the book as her crowning argument.

He answered her with a laugh which sounded very much as if he did not believe her very implicitly, and rather enjoyed the doubt he harbored.

"Well, what news?" said the young lady, retiring within the grotto and seating herself upon one of the grassy seats.

"Oh, good, I suppose; but good with a reservation," said he, with a return of his moody look, and throwing himself on the grass at her feet. "I am to have you, but I am to wait for you until the close of the war. Now, every hour's waiting is purgatory to me; I want you now, and I can't have you! I feel as if I wanted to cut the whole concern and live my own circumscribed round of happiness. But this will explain all," and he handed her a letter.

"I am sorry I am not worth waiting for," said she smiling, as she opened the letter.

"Worth waiting for a thousand years if one had it to spare; but life is too short to wait," was the answer,

CAMP NEAR MANASSAS, October 12th, 1861.

MY DARLING CHILD,—I do feel age creeping on me truly when a man comes to me to ask that he may take you as his wife!—you whom I have never realised to be other than a very child. I had to stand up and go over the years and find that you were all of eighteen before I recovered from my surprise sufficiently to give Lieutenant Dallam even an ordinary welcome. Eighteen! can it be possible? It seems but the other day and your own mother was eighteen and my bride; and Margie was also a wife at eighteen. But still I cannot bear the idea of your throwing away your bright young girlhood already. If I had half a dozen other daughters coming on it would be different, but you are the last. Why can't the men let my girls alone, anyhow? It is a hard case after a man has had

all of the trouble and expense of bringing up a family of daughters, just to hand over the whole thing to the first fine fellow who comes along and wants them.

Now, child, so much for your old father's grumbling; but he does not feel for all that that he has any right to withhold his consent without good reason. Mamma writes me that you are very much *in love*. Shame upon you! Who ever heard of a decorous young female committing such an impropriety?

I like Mr. Dallam very much; he is frank and open-hearted, and seems in earnest. He stands very well with his command, and has shown his devotion to our cause by what he has sacrificed. So, my child, he may look forward in the future to claiming you as his wife. These are no times to be "marrying and giving in marriage;" wait until better times dawn upon us, and we will wake up the echoes at old Rose Hill with another Virginia wedding. Love to all.

Your devoted father,

EDWARD HOLCOMBE.

"Well," said Mary, folding up her letter, "I think Papa is very kind and reasonable."

"Then I am unreasonable and unkind by contrast, I presume," said the young gentleman, a little sulkily.

"No, I think you are both very much what I want you to be," and she blushed and laughed with pretty mischievous shyness. "I think it is very delightful in him not to want to give me up; and — and — well, and very charming in you to want me so very much."

"As if any one could help it!" said he, looking up at her. And I think but few of his sex would have made an issue with him on that question, as she leaned for-

ward towards him, with her elbows on her knees and her white hands supporting her face, so full of softness, brightness, youth and beauty.

"I think you ought to be satisfied," said she; "it will give you an opportunity of seeing me in a new light. I am going to be so very constant that it will be a continually recurring happiness to you."

"I don't know, indeed," said he, imitating her bantering tone. "I don't believe you can help smiling on all these fellows; and if you once smile they are gone."

"Nonsense, that is all your partiality. But if you will only be satisfied, I won't smile even."

"Oh, oh, that will never do; I wouldn't like to think of you in anything different from what you are now. I have you painted here," putting his hand on his heart, "and shall want to see you unchanged when I come back again."

This was their last conversation for some time, as Mr. Dallam's leave having expired, the next morning saw him on his way back to his regiment.

Captain Williams had been away during the progress of these events, having left immediately after the affair at Hawk's Nest to visit some friends in the neighborhood, and he did not return until after Mr. Dallam's departure, so was in ignorance of the existing state of things. The evening of his return Mary sought him out and said:

"Mr. Williams, I have never had an opportunity of telling you how very sorry I was for the way I behaved the other day; it was both silly and ungrateful. Won't you forgive me?"

"Not a very hard thing to do when you ask with that pleading face," said he, taking her hand and smil-

ing. "I always knew it was more due to the influence you were under than anything else."

"Indeed you are wrong," was the eager answer; "he was as sorry as I was."

Captain Williams looked incredulous as he answered:

"Well, perhaps so; but I confess I am not very much prepossessed in favor of the young man — an idle dog, without any settled principle to sustain him."

"Oh, Mr. Williams!" and she disengaged her hand from his, though with an expression more of grief than anger, "I know you would not say so if you knew him. How much he has sacrificed for principle! And besides, you must not talk so to me," looking down and pointing him to a ring on her finger as she spoke; "I am engaged to be married to him."

Had the sky fallen she could not have been more astonished than she was by the effect of her words. Seizing her arm with a grasp almost painful to her, his eyes blazing like burning coals, looking out from his pale agitated face, he almost shouted:

"Child, you don't know what you do! it cannot be so. Do you think I am going to give you up to him, after watching you maturing for *me* through all these years? Do you know that you utterly destroy me by such an avowal?"

Pale and terrified by his violence, Mary could only articulate: "Oh, Mr. Williams, you never told me."

"Told you? no! Break in upon the sweet early maidenhood of a child like you with a tale such as mine? No, I left that for others. Fool! dolt! that I have been not to see what was going on. To lock myself up in careless security, and allow another to reap where I had sown! And that other! May God have mercy

upon us both!" And the strong man bowed his face in his hands.

A dead silence rested upon the two for the space of a minute. Once Mary put out her hand and laid it in his, but without seeming to be conscious of the action. He shook it off as if the very touch was pain too great to be borne. At last he raised his head and found her sitting there, her usually bright face convulsed with sobs of pity and grief.

"My child," he said, very gently, "I have frightened and grieved you. I have been selfishly considering myself alone in this matter. There, don't sob so! God knows I would sacrifice myself any time to save you sorrow. But it has been such a cherished dream, and sad awakening!" He did not tell her that he could better have borne to see her in her grave than to have given her where she had given herself. He did not tell her that even now he would gladly, with no selfish feeling, put her in the arms of a man worthy of her. No; but he thought it all bitterly enough.

"If—I had—only—known," sobbed Mary; "but I nev—never—suspected such—a thing; you—were so—much older—and wiser than I."

Captain Williams smiled a very sad smile; he had been so young in his thoughts of her always.

"Look at this, Mary," he said, taking from his bosom a package and opening it: "here is the date of my idea."

She looked and saw an exquisite painting of a child with long sunny hair, standing on a ledge of rock, and the bright beams of a morning sun lighting up the figure with glorious beauty. She remembered it all, so long ago. She recalled her childish delight as

she stood there to have her likeness made, remembered her pride when she looked at the rough draft, but she could not connect any such simple scene with the present; it seemed unnatural and wrong.

As if answering her thought, Mr. Williams said:

"I do not mean for an instant that a child such as you were then was capable of inspiring a mature man with a strong passion, but then and there I tried first to picture the beauty, grace, and loveliness of character which might be built upon that foundation, and from this I formed my ideal of what my wife should be; but I did not have the least desire to hasten this development. I dwelt upon each step towards maturity with delight, and so sweet was each to my heart that I would fain have bid it stay forever. Blind, blind that I was! I never thought of your fixing your affections on any one else."

Mary looked helplessly miserable through her tears. Was it disloyalty to her betrothed lover that the thought came unbidden to her: Had she known all this long ago it might have been different? She may have thought so, for her words were almost like a reparation as she raised her tearful eyes to his:

"Mr. Williams, I do not think it is good for either of us to talk this way. It does not — pardon me for saying it, but it does not seem right for me to listen to such confessions now, nor does it help you to make them. You scarcely grieve over this more than I do; and perhaps I ought not to ask it, but indeed, indeed I feel as if I could not give up your friendship — it has made so much of my life. Oh, Mr. Williams! we are both so young and untried: be our friend, will you not?"

He did not answer for a moment; it seemed as if he could not. If she had said "Be my friend," he would have responded promptly; but the "our" went to his heart: it seemed to set a seal to the misery of his own fate — the loneliness of his life.

"You will not need me," he said at length.

"Oh, don't say that, my friend! There is no one in this world who could take your place to me; you are connected with almost all of my life. I do depend upon you."

"Oh, Mary," he said, "you ask a hard favor at my hands, and yet one which, God helping me, I will not refuse to you. I could never be other than the best friend to you the warmest affection of my heart could make me, and for your sake I will be to him also. I will try to bury self in my great desire for your best happiness and good, my child. Try and forget what I have said this morning. Doubtless I shall do very well; at any rate, always know that you can come to me for any help I can give." He rose up as he spoke, and she put her hand in his. For one moment he bent over her as if he was irresistibly impelled to take her to his heart in a last parting; but if he had such thought it never vented itself in action, as he turned away, and leaping over a fence at a little distance, disappeared in the direction of the stables. Mary retired to her own room, and came down at dinner-time, to hear that Mr. Williams had gone, leaving his love and adieus for her.

She wandered about all day in a dream. Her mother and sister rallied her upon her low spirits, attributing it to the parting from her lover; but could they have heard the note of her heart they would have been surprised at the sad refrain it was repeating over and over

again. "I never wished to hasten this development. I dwelt upon each step towards maturity with delight, and so sweet was each to my heart that I would fain have bid it stay forever;" and she found herself wishing more than once that she had known Mr. Dallam thus long that he might so express his love.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart;
'Tis woman's whole existence."—BYRON.

MRS. HOLCOMBE sat alone at the breakfast-table at the close of the morning meal. The rest of the family had but a moment before left the room, and Robin and Tom, the two dining-room servants, were moving busily about, removing the débris of the meal, piling together at one end of the table the china which had been used preparatory to the final "washing up," an operation which Mrs. Holcombe always superintended in person, and indeed took part in, as might be inferred from the pile of white towels at her elbow, one of which was unfolded and lay ready for use upon her lap. But the thoughts of the active housekeeper were far away from the homely affairs of her household. One hand supported her head, and the sweet, fair face wore a cloud of care and anxiety very different from its ordinary expression of calm content and quiet happiness. The gentle gleam of the warm brown eyes took in none of the surrounding objects; they had travelled far off after her thoughts and her heart to the camp and the battle-field. She was startled from her reverie by an unmusical voice at her side:

"Good mornin', Misstis."

"Ah, Aunt Ailsie, I am glad to see you. I did not hear you come in," and the unselfish nature banished at once the thoughts which, although painful, were still

sweet, and the face lighted up with a smile of gracious welcome to the poor dependent.

"Thank you, Misstis," said the old woman, bowing low, and speaking with a peculiar lisp: "I is still spyarin — tumblin' over the clods on pleadin' groun'."

Although this had been her normal condition whenever Mrs. Holcombe had spoken to her, it always provoked a smile, and it was with a face of genuine amusement that she pursued her inquiries.

"I am glad to see it, Aunt Ailsie. I hope too that you are right well?"

"Well, not so vay, my Misstis; I is somewhat hamstringded," rubbing as she spoke her lower limbs. "And I is got a turble mis'ry in my back," swaying her person back and touching the suffering member with a lachrymose countenance; "en a goneness en a coleness in my insides," extending both of her ample hands so as to cover the entire front of her trunk.

"Indeed, I am very sorry; can I do anything for you?" was the sympathising rejoinder.

"Well, Misstis, I thinks a little of your hot coffee might do me some good; 'twould warm me up a little," and she handed her as she spoke a battered tin-cup, showing that the remedy had been a foregone conclusion.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Holcombe, laughing. "Robin, fill Aunt Ailsie's cup for her."

"And don't furgit de sugar, Misstis, if you please; sugar is vay good for de insides."

"Be sure and put plenty of sugar, Robin," said the lady.

"Thank you, Misstis; 'twas a blessed day when you come here to look arter we poor niggars. When you hear fum Marster?"

"Oh, Aunt Ailsie, not for some time," and with a deep sigh the burden was resumed and the cloud again overshadowed the face. "I hope he will be at home soon."

"Yes, Misstis, I trus' de Lord will fotch him home 'fore long, an' not let enythin' hurt him. We miss him bad enuf. When will de fitin' be dun?"

"God only knows, Aunt Ailsie; I feel in despair about it. Oh this dreadful, dreadful war!"

The knob of the door had been turned twice during this conversation, as if some one on the other side was trying to gain courage to enter; and no better commentary upon her last sad exclamation could have been given than Captain Murray's face of grave seriousness which now appeared looking in upon them.

"Jean," said he, coming up to her and putting his arm around her. "come with me, my sister; I have something to say to you."

It needed no further words to convey to Mrs. Holcombe's mind the apprehension of heartrending intelligence. Women held their treasures in those sad times by too frail a tenure to need much preparation for surrendering them; but if she wanted confirmation for her fears, the sound, which fell upon her ears through the open door, of suppressed cries and sobs would have been sufficient. A being of a stronger nature than Mrs. Holcombe would have vented her sorrow in shrieks and cries; she only twined her arms about her brother, and her broken wail told its tale not less touchingly for its gentleness.

"Ah, Robert, tell me he is not dead! I can bear anything else."

"No, no, my sister, only a very bad wound; and you must go to him."

"Oh, yes! let me go now!" she gasped, starting forward towards the door. "Where is he?" But her strength failed her and she fainted.

The letter had been brought by the hand of Mr. Holcombe's own servant, who had gone with him to the field. It was directed to Mrs. Holcombe, but James said the doctor had told him if there was any gentleman there to let him read it first. It ran thus:

BRANDY STATION, October 10th, 1861.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Mr. Holcombe requests me to write to you this morning, as he is unable to do so owing to a severe wound received yesterday in a skirmish with the enemy. The bullet entered his thigh, shattering the bone. I will not conceal from you, my dear madam, that he is in great danger; the more so because he lay for some time before help reached him; but with the blessing of God he may recover. Amputation of the limb is absolutely necessary, and will be done as soon as he recovers strength sufficient to stand the operation. As, however, he may not survive, he earnestly desires that you will come to him as soon as you receive this. And as our hospital arrangements are very incomplete, and it is impossible to procure for him such comforts as are necessary to him in his present condition, I would advise that you bring with you anything of the kind you can command on so short a notice.

I hope you will excuse the abruptness and apparent harshness of my words, and accept the sincere sympathy of,

Yours respectfully,
JAMES COOPER, M. D.

The whole house was in a state of confusion. Margaret and Mary went about the preparations for Mrs. Holcombe's departure with tearful eyes. Maids might be seen hurrying here and there with articles of clothing or house-linen over their arms, while in the midst of business the same air of sadness pervaded all. The tempest cannot sweep down the noble oak without rending its roots even to the smallest fibre.

In order that her strength might be husbanded for the coming journey and the fatigue she must undergo at the end of it, Mrs. Holcombe was induced to lie down in her own room; indeed she was so stunned and shattered by the blow which had fallen with such crushing weight upon her, that she was utterly incapable for a time of any exertion.

When Eddy heard the sad news he seized his gun, and stalking out, declared vengeance on the "Yankees;" but he ended on the bed beside "mamma," where in his own way he comforted her, crying because she cried, and at last, with the happy privilege of childhood, sobbing himself to sleep. And so she left him, and to others the task of consolation after her departure.

It was decided to pack a wagon with such articles as might promote the comfort of the sufferer, including a bed and plenty of house-linen, also brandy, wine, and such other luxuries as the house afforded; and thus not only the supplies could be as abundant as the love and anxiety of the household desired, but that the progress of the carriage over the rough mountain road might be unimpeded by burdensome baggage.

As Mrs. Holcombe took her seat in the carriage and was receiving the last farewells and messages from her weeping daughters, a queer-looking old figure, clad in

a blue cotton dress and white apron, with a long calico sun-bonnet stuck upon the top of a stupendous turban, while the voluminous folds of a blanket-shawl enveloped her person, presented herself at the carriage door. It was Mammy.

"Stop a minute, my childern; your old Mammy is goin' too."

"Oh, Mammy!" remonstrated Jean, "I am afraid it is impossible; there will be nowhere for you to stay, and you cannot stand being put about anywhere, as you could when you were younger."

"I don't want nowhere to stay, Miss Jean, but right by my marster's bed — that's my place;" and her eyes filled with tears as she added in an imploring voice, stretching out her arms, "dese arms wus de fust dat ever had hold of him, en dey ain't never been none of de family sick or dien dat I ain't nust. I is helpt to bring 'em in de world and to shet dey eyes when dey lef' it, an dus you think dat I is goin' to let enybody help you to nuss my Mars Ned but me? If you dunnot choose for me to ride wid you in de carriage, you has a right to say so; but 'fore God, Misstis! I never thot to be a runaway nigger yet, but ef you won't 'gree to my goin' I will start off and walk, and maybe you will fine your ole Mammy layin' dead by de roadside somewhar; but 'twill be on her way to whar Mars Ned is."

There was no further opposition to Mammy's will after that, nor was Jean sorry to have the company of the faithful old creature.

Their way lay over a mountainous country, and at any other time Mrs. Holcombe would have been lost in admiration of the beauty of the scenery, but it

passed unnoticed now. Mr. Murray rode on ahead, but every now and then, where the road was wide enough to admit of it, he would return beside the carriage and strive to divert her mind into a more cheerful channel by pointing out objects of interest; but he soon discovered that the very effort to seem interested exhausted her, and left her to her own sad thoughts.

It was nearly sundown when they reached their journey's end, nor was the prospect which met the eyes of our travellers one calculated to have a cheering influence upon them. They seemed to have passed quite out of the region of luxuriant vegetation into bleak desolation. Brandy Station could scarce be dignified with the name of town. There was the inevitable long, low building which enlivens the eye of the traveller in passing over Virginia railways, a blacksmith-shop, and one or two miserable-looking wooden dwellings in the distance. As the carriage drew up in front of the depot, its occupants peered anxiously from the window in search of some human being of whom they could make the necessary inquiries. But in vain. There were two or three horses with cavalry accoutrements tied to a rack at a little distance; but this was the only circumstance which relieved the mind from the impression that they had stumbled upon a faded edition of Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*. The horses must have had riders, was the inevitable conclusion arrived at in Mr. Murray's thoughts, and it was to find these riders he directed his first actions. Dismounting hastily and fastening his horse, he ran up the steps and entered the first door which he encountered. It led him into a long, low room, which was filled with barrels and boxes, and seemed to be used as a storehouse for

commissary stores. In the centre of the room was fixed a battered old stove, the dirt and rust of which had been permitted to accumulate until the advent of more prosperous times should encourage such peace occupations as cleaning. The evening was cool, and a fire had been lighted, around which three or four men in gray were sitting with their boots drawn over their pants, their leathern caps stuck sideways on the head or slouched down over the eyes, and their feet elevated to a position somewhat higher than their heads, which position was facilitated by the tilting back of their chairs and the convenient support afforded by the high stove, which served not only to diffuse a warmth through the room but also for the purpose of footstool. This accounted for the strong smell of burning leather which pervaded the apartment as Mr. Murray entered.

The consciousness of his presence was instantly signified by the noise of the chairs resuming their original and natural positions, and the three occupants thereof rose and doffed their caps in deference to his superior rank.

"I am looking for Captain Holcombe, who is lying wounded somewhere about here — can you tell me where?" said Captain Murray, returning the salutation.

"Yes, sir," said one of the men, acting as spokesman for the rest, and pointing to one of the small dwellings which we have before noticed; "that's the hos-*pit*-al over there. He is pretty bad, I am afraid, and a great loss he'd be to us too. He is a brave man, he is."

Without waiting to pursue the question of his brother-in-law's merits as a soldier, Mr. Murray hastened out to his sister, to whom in her great anxiety and suspense the few moments of his absence had seemed an age. Hastily mounting, he rode before the

carriage to the place signified, where he found the doctor in attendance upon his patient.

Jean never knew distinctly how she got through those few minutes which intervened between her arrival and her entrance to a bare, comfortless-looking room, containing as almost its only furniture a pallet of straw with an army-blanket stretched over it; and from this she saw two arms extended towards her, and heard a voice so feeble and broken that she would not have recognised it if it had not said:

"Oh Jean, at last! at last!"

In another moment she was on the bare boards beside her husband, and he alone heard her whispered ejaculation: "Thank God! thank God!"

"And Robert and Mammy, too," said the sick man, after a few moments in which he had been conscious of but one presence in the room; "this is delightful! more than I dared hope."

The wagon soon arrived, and the sufferer was before long lifted into a bed of comparative luxuriance, and surrounded by everything which the most devoted love could supply; while the doctor spoke hopefully of his soon being able to undergo the operation which, though it would rob him of a portion of his body, would greatly facilitate his recovery.

Mr. Murray was obliged to turn his face towards "Rose Hill" that night, as he was anxious to carry some relief to the sad hearts of its inmates, and besides was himself forced to rejoin his regiment in a few days.

Brandy Station, October 14th, 1861.

My Dear Girls,—The fearful trial is over at last, and the doctors think favorably of our dear one,

though of course he is terribly exhausted. I wanted to stay with him, but they would not hear of it; and I dare say they were right. Women are very good-for-nothing, no-account sort of creatures; but dear old Mammy would not leave, and held his hand all the time. He says he did not suffer much, as he was under the influence of chloroform; and now his principal discomfiture arises from a distinct impression of the foot which he says he feels all the time. He actually made me put my hand down in the bed to feel for it this morning. He is wonderfully cheerful and don't mind his loss as much as I do, though I dare say he conceals his feeling on my account.

The wagon arrived yesterday before the operation, and we had the bedstead put up and his room looking nicely before the doctors arrived.

I think you can all ride over to see him next week if he continues to improve, and I will try and persuade Mammy to go back with you. I feel so uneasy about her. She has no place to stay, and all the sleep she gets is sitting straight up in her chair. I am thankful enough though that she came, for what I would have done without her I cannot imagine. She has been everything to us both; it has been the crowning service of a faithful life, and if she had never done another thing for us we ought to cherish her for this.

I hope my precious baby is a good boy. Tell him Mamma and Papa often talk of him and wish for him, and dear little Robert too. I wish I could see you all. Do send us any news from our friends. With love from your father and Mammy for all, I am your devoted Mamma,

JEAN HOLCOMBE.

CHAPTER IX.

——"in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death do us part."—MARRIAGE CEREMONY.

"JEAN, how are you going to stand having half of a man for your husband?" said Captain Holcombe to his wife, as she reclined beside him.

She tried to repress the nervous shudder which the thought of his loss always gave her, and answered quite cheerfully, kissing him:

"Half of this husband is better than the whole of any other. I am too thankful to have you at all to complain of anything."

"But don't you think you will be very proud of me when you see me hopping round on my crutches like a chicken on one leg, with the empty leg of my trowsers pinned up?"

"Oh, Mr. Holcombe, please!" she said.

"There is one good thing though," he continued, laughing (rather ruefully it must be confessed): "in the desperately hard times which are coming on us I can economise cloth. I won't have any other leg at all to my pants."

She put her hand over his mouth. "I can't bear to hear you talk that way."

"Well," said he, kissing her hand as he took it away, "it is no use to grieve over it; and so long as the Good Father spares our lives and leaves me so much to be thankful for, I don't intend to. Poor George now has

lost more than I have; that fine boy, cut down in a flash! It was a hard trial; he can't get over it."

"Poor fellow! you saw him after he fell, didn't you?"

"Yes, and it almost broke my heart. The blow had struck so suddenly home that there was no time even to break the expression of joy on his face. You know he was killed in the final charge, when victory was certain, and there was the expression of triumphant joy on his dead face. He had fallen backward, with his hand above his head, and I have no doubt he was cheering with his arm upraised when death overtook him."

"It is so hard to associate the idea of death with any one so bright and joyous as he was."

"Yes, it is. John, who was standing by me as we uncovered his face, said while the tears streamed from his eyes: 'Father, he went straight to heaven, I know he did; it was only last night as we lay together on the grass, on our way down here from Winchester, that he said: Johnny, I tell you I have been thinking of all Aunt Annie said to me before I left Winchester, and I am determined to be a Christian; these are ticklish times for us, old fellow, and I have been trying to prepare for our fight by a peace to my soul; I am going to ask Him to take care of me before we go to battle, or to take me to Himself.'"

"Only think," said Jean, "what a change, from that scene of carnage, confusion, pain, and terror, to the joys and peace of heaven! It almost makes one feel as if they would have liked to have gone with him to have experienced it."

"I only wish Johnny was safe," said Mr. Holcombe. "I feel far more anxiety about him than I do about myself; I build so many hopes on that boy."

"Why don't you try and get him a post appointment?" asked his wife; "I have no doubt you could."

"Not I," said Mr. Holcombe, shaking his head. "It shall never be said of me that I sheltered my son while other people had theirs in the army. Let such poor mutilated men as myself fill the bullet-proof places; we can do no better. But he owes his life, if need be, to his country, and I thank God that he is willing to give it. We must only commit him to our Father in heaven; He can protect him as well on the battle-field as in the shelter of our own home."

"I know it all, but it is hard to feel it," said Jean. "But you are not in earnest about filling any office now?"

"Certainly I am. As soon as I get well enough, I shall go to Richmond and go into service in one of the Departments, and put my substitute in the army."

"Oh, Mr. Holcombe! I thought you would go home after this; it was my only consolation," and the tears sprang to her eyes.

"Ah, little woman," said he, trying to laugh her out of her sad mood, "you are not a heroine by any means. In fact I have but one objection to you, and that is a serious one: you are too English; if you were a Virginian, born and bred, you would say so sweetly 'Go, my dear husband, do what you can, since you are not fit for service in the field.'"

"Then I certainly am not a Virginian," she said, answering his laugh. "I think you have earned an exemption from service. I would have you come right home and stay there for the rest of the war, and let the men who are able do the work."

"I shall have to write to Mr. Davis that you are demoralising his men."

"Trying to, I confess, but not succeeding," was the answer.

"No; reserve your eloquence for something in which there is a shadow of hope of success, Mistress Jean. I shall stay in the army as long as the Southern Confederacy wants me, or as long as there is enough of me left to work for her. But I do believe, Jean," he added, turning his teasing face to her, "you would be glad of the loss of my leg if it only kept me out of the army."

"Not glad," said she; "of course I never could be that, but reconciled to anything which would keep you with me all of the time."

"Miss Jean," said Mammy, putting her head in at the door, "de karidge is comin', wid all de childern in it."

In another minute the room was a scene of joyous welcome. Margie, Mary, Eddy, and the baby, made up the sum of the arrivals.

"Why, Mary, what is the matter?" said Mr. Holcombe when Mary's embrace of him refused to come to an end; trying to lift up her face—"crying, I declare! Don't want piece of a Papa! Jean there pays me the handsome compliment of saying that half of me is better than all of anybody else; but she is foolish, you know." Then he added more seriously: "Come, little daughter, don't be ungrateful! God has been very good to us all; and don't grieve over my slight loss, when through the whole country 'Rachel is weeping for her children, and refuses to be comforted because they are not.'"

"I know all that, Papa," said Mary, trying to stop the tears which would come in spite of her, "but I never realised it until I saw you lying here, and your one leg looking so dreadfully narrow there in the bed. It seems so awful to think of your having gone through such suffering and none of us able to help you."

"Well," said Margaret, "of course it is dreadful; but for my part I think we all ought to glory in such a loss. I shall always look upon Papa as a hero with his one leg. It is like the old Revolutionary times."

"Unfortunately, Margie, there will be so many heroes that no one will be distinguished by such a badge of honor," said Mr. Holcombe. Then turning to Eddy, who stood quiet and awe-struck beside his mamma:

"Well, little man, what do you think about it all? Do you want to be a soldier?"

But Master Eddy's enthusiasm was quite quenched by the stern reality. He shook his head, and said gravely:

"Me'd radder be a ambulanch-driver."

"But the Yankees sometimes shoot ambulance, drivers."

"Den me will tay home wid Mamma and feed de chickens."

"You have taught *him* well at any rate, Jean," said Mr. Holcombe laughing; "he is his mamma's own boy."

"Why, Mammy," said Margaret, turning to the old woman who stood behind her chair with the baby clasped in her arms, "you don't show the effects of nursing as much as Mamma. You look as blooming as a rose."

"He! he! he! Miss Margit, it mus' be a monsus black rose I blooms like. I leaves it to de white ladies to look pretty like de flowers. Nigger ain't like nothin' but one big black hollyhock—and dat's most too pretty for him. How is all de people at home?"

"All pretty well. Aunt Ailsie says she is 'still painful,' but you know she always is."

"Oh yes, ma'am! no need to be oneasy 'bout her. Ailsie is always been a kind o' fool nigger anyhow. I

been know'd her now sense we was gals togedder, en she never had no sense, no way you fix it."

"She is a good creature though," said Mrs. Holcombe.

"Oh yes, madam," said the censor, charitably, "she don't mean no harm 'tall; but she's jist a fool, and she can't help dat, you knows."

"Yes," said Mr. Holcombe, "I remember hearing my mother talking to Ailsie one day and saying: 'Yes, Aunt Ailsie, you are just the kind of negro I like; one of your good old-time fool negroes, with plenty of sense to do what you are told, and no more.'"

"Yes," said Mammy, sententiously, "old Miss always sot a great deal of store by Ailsie; and she is a good kind o' creater, tho' she is a fool."

"That you insist upon, Mammy," said Mary, laughing.

"Uv corse, uv corse," said Mammy. "Bless de baby," she added, hugging the little nursling closer to her, "he is a raal Holcombe, he is. Did you ever see sich splendid legs? De Holcombes always had splendid legs."

"Stop, Mammy, you are treading on my toes now," said the invalid ruefully; "you forget you must not talk about legs where I am."

"I beg you pardon, Mars Ned," said the old woman, bowing low before him; "I did cum monsus near furgittin' you a minnit. But thank the Good Marster above he is provide you wid plenty uv young legs to run errants fur you before He tuck yourn away."

"Mammy, I want to take you home with us this evening," said Margaret Murray; "Uncle Bob looks very disconsolate without you."

"Uv corse, Miss Margit, it is jist as de white folks say, but I would prafer stayin teli your father gits on his feet agin."

"Foot, Mammy, foot!" exclaimed Mr. Holcombe, in mock indignation.

"I beg you pardon, marster; I like to a forgit agin," said Mammy, repeating and increasing her salaam.

"Well, Mammy," said Mrs. Holcombe, "of course I shall miss you dreadfully, but I really think I must spare you." It won't do to run any risk with you, old lady. You must be taken care of, and besides Uncle Bob ought to be looked after."

"Is to Bob, Misstis," said Mammy, with a profound disregard of her matrimonial relations, "I don't keer nothin' it all 'bout him. He kin git on jist as well widout me. But ef you don't want me to stay, I kin go."

"Of course I want you, but I feel that it would be best for you to go, so get your things ready."

CHAPTER X.

"No tears
Dim the sweet look that Nature wears."— LONGFELLOW.

AGAIN does our story carry us to the old town of Winchester, in the Valley of Virginia. Our farewell greeting was given amid the bustle and excitement of the hasty evacuation of the place prior to the battle of Manassas, and we left our friends in all the dismay consequent upon the expected entry of the Federal forces. To those who are at all familiar with the history of the times, it will be superfluous to tell of the rapid changes which prevented this invasion, and left the Valley for a time free from the presence of either army, transferring the scene of war to the other side of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Since then the earth has made three-quarters of its circuit around the sun. Summer burnt itself away; and Autumn, "rising like a phœnix from its ashes," built her throne with gaudy splendor, reigned her brief space, and then, submissive to the law of Nature, stood aside respectfully to permit the entrance of grim, hoary-headed old Winter, who came roaring down from his mountain fastnesses, and shook the earth with the breath of his nostrils, announcing with his whirlwind voice that man shall no longer seek his happiness abroad in field and wood and by the rippling stream, but under his despotic but kindly sway shall learn the joys of home. So he lays his hand upon the tender

verdure of meadow and wood, and shrinking, it withers silently. He but touches with his icy fingers the dancing, singing rivulet, and mutely it congeals, turning up its pallid face in dumb appeal. But by way of compensation the old king spreads over the desolation a soft white mantle, and hangs from tree, shrub, and house-top his jeweled fringe; while within the house he throws on the hickory logs and lights his Christmas fires, and as the flame goes crackling and roaring up the chimney he laughs his merry ha! ha! and young men and maidens, old men and children, join in the mad mirth, acknowledging, while tossing the white snow-ball, engaging in the merry game, dancing in the ruddy firelight, or welcoming joyous Christmas, that Winter's stern, harsh, despotic manner but covers a warm, genial, loving heart.

Winter is a true sovereign and loves the regal sway; nor does he surrender it without a struggle. But the greatest danger is that which makes gradual approaches and gains the ground before its presence is suspected. So Spring comes with its revivifying glance, and silently breaks the bond which has held rivulet and stream so long torpid; breathes upon meadow and wood, and life stirs within them, and old Winter suddenly awakens to the fact that his throne is in danger. But, alas! he has grown too feeble for resistance, and retreats before the life and brightness which is everywhere felt. But growling out his impotent rage, he "sends back from his flying footsteps showers of snow and hail," which, ungrateful time-servers as they are, go over to the enemy, and tempered by the mild beams of the new sovereign, dance in the flowing stream and brighten the springing grass; and at last the old king,

with all of his obstinacy melted out of him by the warm arguments of the sun, submits to the inevitable with the best grace he may, and sets the seal to his abdication by retiring from the contest.

Winchester, as a town, is not so pleasant to look upon as when we saw it last. The people are too busy wielding the sword to wield the paint-brush; and the houses which for many years past, like a decayed belle, have only been able to renew their youth through the influence of artificial means, have now sunk into Shakspeare's seventh age, "*sans* everything," with a decidedly dingy look of despondency over their uncomely and shabby appearance.

Winchester for several months has been the headquarters of the Confederate army; and the time has been passed in busy inactivity, each army striving to out-manœuvre the other, watching like a lion making ready to leap upon the least appearance of unwariness on the part of its opposer. One day the entire Confederate force under General Jackson is ordered forward towards Bunker's Hill, and expectation sits breathless, waiting for the first gun which might announce the opening of the battle which seems to be imminent; but the next move is a retreat to Strausburg, twenty miles further down the Valley, and with equal failure of results. Once it seemed at last as if a serious move must be in contemplation, as the men were ordered to prepare four days' rations, and be ready to march at a moment's notice. The weather had been bright and clear for some weeks, though still very cold; and General Jackson, with what persons had learned to designate as his war-look, started off at the head of his forces towards Bath. The very next day the fine

weather broke up in a miserable soaking rain, ending in sleet, snow, and sullen skies, with no promise of the sun shining behind the clouds. Their travel over the mountains, which in good weather would have been delightful after their inactive winter, was rendered deplorably fatiguing. Men gave out and lay down by the roadside; horses slipping in the slimy mud could scarcely regain their lost footing; and the journey prolonged so much beyond its prescribed limits, provisions for man and beast became exhausted, and the sufferings were terrible. Many soldiers at the end of the war, in talking over their hardships, spoke of this as the most painful march they had ever had. Of course the whole expedition was a failure, as they arrived at Bath too late to accomplish anything, and the army returned to Winchester, dispirited and murmuring at what seemed to them a useless and unwise expenditure of their strength. Sickness also increased amongst them, and but for the unsurpassed energy and perseverance of their General, despondency would have taken indissoluble hold of his troops; but with his unswerving pursuit of duty, his never-failing faith in God, and his indomitable courage and energy, he before long managed to infuse some of his spirit into them, and the enthusiasm and constancy of the mass of the people also having its effect, spring opened with more cheerful aspects and hopes than had been at first anticipated.

Our old friends on Fort Hill were as indefatigable as ever, and encouraged by former escapes, declared their renewed conviction that the Yankees would never enter Winchester during the war —

> "Mistaken souls, that dream of heaven
> And make their empty boast."

"So you enjoyed the trip to Bath, Mr. Hautman?" said Ellen Randolph to her young German friend, who had recovered from his wound in time to join the army at Winchester.

"Oh, so much, Meis Randof! If de war be ofer, I vill go up dare, in de rain and ice nex' winter, for de amusement; but it vill not be so pleasan' vidout my artilry."

"Why?" asked Ellen. "Do you ride on the guns?"

"Not so mouch," shrugging his shoulders and laughing; "de gun do not carry de men, but de men carry de gun, en dat is vat makes it so mouch pleasant. Vat you think, Mr. Elliot?" turning to a young man in artillery uniform.

"Well," said Mr. Elliot, "I hope never to have such a march again. I will not certainly go with you on your party of pleasure next winter. The infantry had a bad enough time, but it was a bed of roses to the artillery, because as much stronger as a horse is than a man so much more does he suffer with hunger, and as much more as a horse weighs than a man so much heavier is he to get out of the mud."

"You see Meester Elliot have one mafematical mine, Meis Randof; en vat he say is var true. It made me laf, I was so mad evry day to see de Infants down by de roadside, *so tired he could not get up*, fen one minnit I had de gun on my shoulder gettin' it out uf de mud, en the nex de horse on my back, takin' him up de hill. He slip down six times already; but de horse is one noble animal, I tells you. Fy, my horse live for two days on de back of one army-vaggin what was pefore him. Ever now and den I hear sumfin crashin' away, en I look en anoder piece ef board gone. But I say

nuffin, en presently I see daylight trou. But I say nuffin till de driver turn roun' en see me en my horse. Den he var mad and curse at me var hard, en say, 'Fut for you let your horse eat my vaggin for?' En I take off my hat en bow to her var polite en say, 'My good man, ef you vant not my horse to eat your vaggin you mus' keep out ob de way; 'cause my horse is var hungry, en like your vaggin var much.'"

"Well, what did you do when the wagon gave out?" said Ellen, laughing heartily.

"Do! Vy I go to de ordnance-officer, en ask him var respectful to gif me order fur sum cartridge-box. 'Fat you vant vid cartridge-box?' he say, var loud. 'To feed my horse on,' I say. 'He haf eat de back out of a vaggin, en he vill starf if he no get sum cartridge-box or sumfin else.' You could hear him laf most in Winchester."

"And then not to accomplish anything after all that suffering," said Ellen, wiping away the tears, not of sorrow, but of laughter from her eyes—"I declare it was too bad!"

"Fortune of war, Miss Randolph," said Mr. Elliot; "we'll make it up next time. Old Jack won't fail twice hand-running; he knows what he is about."

"He know fut his men is 'bout too," said Mr. Hautman. "Ve is ordered to cook two day rations 'gain to-day. Vill he try de Baf road, I vonder?"

"Oh, Mr. Dallam! how d'ye do?" said Miss Randolph, rising to greet that gentleman, who lounged into the room in his most nonchalant style. "I am glad to see that you have survived your trip to Bath. These gentlemen have just been giving in their experience."

"That any one survived is a wonder, I assure you, Miss Randolph," said Mr. Dallam; "it has killed more men than half a dozen battles. The whole army is barking and wheezing more like an army of dogs than men. It is particularly unfortunate too, as I really think we are going to have a fight."

"A fight! when? where?" exclaimed the whole party eagerly.

"Here, and soon," was the answer. "The Yankees are advancing; indeed they are not more than five miles off now, and the whole army are ordered out to this end of the town. I wonder you have not heard the noise. Now, Miss Randolph, you will have to bring your whole stock of courage to bear upon this emergency; the fight will be just around you here."

"I shan't believe the report of a fight until I hear the guns," said Ellen. "I have got up the requisite amount of agitation so often that my tears are exhausted."

"Is it possible! I thought you ladies had a supply of that commodity ready always at a moment's warning, or even without a moment's warning."

The two artillerymen had left the house on the first report of the expected fight, and attracted by the increasing noise in the streets, Ellen and Mr. Dallam adjourned to the front porch to witness the scene.

It was full of animation; the prospect of a fight having acted as a powerful stimulus to the men, who, to use their own expression, had been "spiling" for it for so many months. But in spite of Ellen Randolph's assertion made a minute ago, that her tears were exhausted, there was a suspicious dew in her eyes at the sight of the crowd of eager faces, all hurrying out to

possible, and even probable death. Their shouts and laughter only added to her sadness, as she could not bear the idea of their meeting death in such mood. It was a relief to her when her companion broke the silence by a commonplace every-day question.

"Have you heard from Rose Hill?"

"Captain Murray was here with a letter from his wife to-day. Uncle Ned and Aunt Jean have reached home. Of course there is great rejoicing."

"Did she say anything about her — her sister?" asked Mr. Dallam.

"Only that she was very well, but not in her usual spirits. But you ought to be able to tell me all about her."

"I have not heard lately; but of course her anxiety about me would keep her in bad spirits, poor little girl! I hope I may be spared for her sake." He looked so handsome and so provokingly confident that it irritated the young lady.

"A little for your own too, I expect," said she tartly. "You gentlemen need not flatter yourselves *ever* on the constancy of our sex. I have no doubt Mary would console herself very quickly for your loss, if she does not tire of you at any rate."

"Not she," was the quiet answer; "her chief charm to me is her fresh trustfulness. I know I am not half her fancy paints me; and yet I would not undeceive her for worlds. I would feel the utmost confidence of her approval in any step I thought best to take, because she really does think everything I do right."

"I think it a great pity for any one to be so blinded by their affection," said Ellen; "because as no one, not even yourself, Mr. Dallam, is perfect, the disappoint-

ment is sure to come. I would rather feel that a friend loved me knowing my faults, and in spite of them, than through self-deception and ignorance placed me on a pedestal where I did not rightly belong."

"But I think she is always going to be blindly devoted," said Mr. Dallam.

"Don't you believe it; Mary has too much sense for that. She is very young, and very undeveloped for her age; but there is a fund of firmness and character under this gentle yielding temper which will show itself some day and surprise you. Let her once find out that you can do wrong, and her idol will be shattered."

Mr. Dallam shrugged his shoulders, but smiled with the calm consciousness of superior wisdom as he said:

"I flatter myself I know the young lady better than you do."

"Better than I do, indeed!" exclaimed Ellen, indignantly—"you the acquaintance of a day comparatively, and I of a life-time! And had you known her as long you would not know her so well. It is impossible until you are married to her. But look, is not that General Jackson? Yes it is, and going to the front too. That is what they call his war look? well, it does change him. Good evening, General!"

"Ah, Miss Randolph, good evening," said the General, stopping at the door and extending his hand. "Listening for the guns? Not frightened, I hope?"

"No, not very much, because I don't believe you are going to fight."

"Looks like it now," said he in his quick way; "enemy very near."

"Then I am frightened," said Ellen.

"No occasion," he said; "only pray for us — that is what the ladies can do. Remember who holds the result in His hands."

"But oh, General, I am so afraid the men will run."

"Oh no, I think not; but if they do, I will put the ladies in their places."

"They will certainly run the first fire," said Ellen, laughing.

"Never!" said the General earnestly. "You do your sex injustice; a woman never deserts the post of duty. Mrs. Mason, how are you? You come as a contradiction of Miss Randolph's words."

"Are you going to fight, General?" asked Mrs. Mason, who joined them.

"I think so. I am ready for them; and if you ladies will help us with your prayers, I feel confident of success."

"May the God of battles go with you," said Mrs. Mason fervently; "through Him you will conquer."

"I know it! I know it!" said he, wringing her hand; "God bless you!" and he was gone, galloping at break-neck speed up the road along which the troops were now hurrying.

But again were their hopes disappointed, as the night fell before the armies closed in battle. The excitement was intense, as it was expected that the fighting would begin at daylight on the morrow. During the evening Mr. Williams and Captain Murray came in, and proposed that they should adjourn to the top of the house and look at the camp-fires, which they did.

It was a beautiful night. The moon was at its full, and moved across the cloudless sky with queenly ma-

jesty, turning her calm face downwards towards the passion-driven earth, as if in mild reproof. Far off, looking like fire-flies in the distance, gleamed the camp-fires of the enemy.

"Can that be a camp-fire round there?" said Captain Murray, pointing to the west.

"It looks like it," said Mr. Williams.

"It should be seen to at once," said Captain Murray, "as in that case they are trying to flank us, and if we should be overwhelmed we will have no way of escape," and off he hurried to General Jackson's headquarters.

The information was startling; and the General, unwilling to trust any one to discover its truth but himself, started out with General Ashby. They found it even so; their retreat was cut off except upon one narrow road, the Valley turnpike.

At ten o'clock at night the evacuation of the town was ordered. The tenure of the place had been for some time so uncertain that all commissary stores had been sent up the Valley, so that the move from the town was an easy matter The sudden change from buoyant enthusiasm to blank despondency for a time overcame the courage of the people. There was no hope of escape this time; "the die was cast."

General Jackson had been staying at the house of a Presbyterian minister, a personal friend. Sending for the gentleman and his wife, they found him striding up and down the parlor, greatly agitated.

"Oh, General," said the lady, in tears, "what is it I hear? You are not going to leave us?"

"I am afraid so, madam, I am afraid so," and then he told the circumstances which compelled the move.

"I had hoped God would have permitted me to stay to guard you dear people. But He does not require me; He will take care of you. I do not think you have anything of danger to apprehend; only be quiet and prudent. I need not say be faithful; but remember you are non-combatants, and have only to keep quiet."

All night were farewells and tears floating through the town. By twelve o'clock most of the troops were on their sad march, leaving the hearthstones which had extended hospitable welcome to them unguarded.

Early the next morning Mrs. Mason, Mrs. Randolph, and Ellen stood upon the pavement in front of the house, looking sadly upon the quiet streets which but a few hours before had been alive with troops, and their gaze turned anxiously towards the road by which they knew the enemy must approach. They were startled to see four horsemen with white bands on their hats and arms, and were about to take flight into the house, thinking it their expected though unwelcome visitants, when Ellen, clearer-sighted than the rest, exclaimed joyfully:

"It is General Ashby! It is our own men"

In the joyful surprise they even imagined that the order for retreat had been reversed. But they were soon undeceived by the General himself, who told them that he with these three men would remain to see the Federal army enter the town, and would then follow the troops and take the last report to General Jackson.

"And tell him — and our friends," sobbed Ellen, with her face buried in her handkerchief, "that — we — are bearing — it as *cheerfully* — as we can."

A slight smile broke the sad stillness of General Ashby's face, while Mrs. Mason said, smiling through her own tears:

"General Ashby can more appropriately say bearing it *tearfully*, Ellen."

And now the last Confederates were gone, and with the earliest beams of the morning sun there appeared what at first sight looked like a heavy dew on the distant grass. It was the light gilding the burnished arms of the enemy, and soon each blade of grass seemed to bring forth a man, spreading and gathering from all directions until the face of the country looking to the north was black with them. So numerous were they that thankful voices went up to Heaven that the discovery of the night before had been made in time to prevent the Confederates hazarding a battle with such terrible disparity of numbers.

Looking down the street in one direction General Ashby could be seen with his three attendants, his eagle eye fixed upon the approaching enemy; and when the advance regiment drew up in front of Mr. Randolph's house and gave three cheers for the Union, they were answered from the street below, and turning, they saw those gallant figures waving their caps over their heads, and loyal to the last, hurled back their three cheers for the Southern Confederacy. Their duty was done, and putting spurs to their horses they were in a moment out of sight.

Winchester had fallen!

CHAPTER XI.

"The firste vertue, sone, if thou wilt lere,
Is to restraine and kepen wel thy tong."—CHAUCER.

FOR some days after the occupation of Winchester by the Federal forces, the non-combatants who were left in the town remained quietly in their houses. The entire place bore a dreadfully gloomy and deserted appearance, in spite of the large army, under Generals Shields and Banks, which occupied it. The houses were all closed from garret to cellar, and none came in or went out of the doors. If it had not been for the negroes, who everywhere openly affiliated with the Yankees, the occupying army might have doubted whether they had not taken possession of mere brick and mortar; but after a few days, finding that none of the horrors they had feared came upon them, and recognising the absolute necessity for intercourse with the outside world for the purpose of procuring the mere requisites of life, the citizens began slowly to resume, as far as they might, the daily routine of their lives. Timid figures might be seen at first issuing from the front doors and meeting other stealthy figures upon the street, even from such meagre stores gathering courage in companionship. There were also actual temptations presented to win them from the strict seclusion they had intended. Federal sutlers filled the stores with tempting goods, and to those who had so long been debarred the privilege of traffic it was no slight attraction. Eager housewives

might be seen supplying the severely felt wants of their households. Bright young faces grew brighter at the unwonted sight of "a love of a bonnet" or a beautiful dress, "and *so cheap.*" If woman has a weakness ineradicable, it is a love of shopping and delight in a bargain; and the times, by forcing them upon short rations of these occupations and attachments, had but whetted the mental appetite, and in a little time the streets were thronged with eager purchasers. All of their small stores of specie were exchanged for greenbacks; treasured gold dollars, or even silver quarters, which, like Jenny's "half a saxpence," had been kept as relics or souvenirs, were laid on the altar, with all their rich stores of loving associations. Even pieces of jewelry and silver were sacrificed to this new fever; and though few of the ladies would have acknowledged it in so many words, even to themselves, yet it was a fact that the end of the week found them better reconciled to the Federal occupation than they had imagined possible.

Among other advantages, it enabled the people to lay up stores for the future, when the return of the Confederate army would reduce them to formerly experienced straits; and there was scarce a household which was not purchasing with a view to this time, hospital stores, groceries, and even clothing for the soldiers.

Nor was this trafficking mania the only occupation which served to pass away the time of the people of Winchester. There were about fifty sick men left in the hospitals of the town by the Confederates, and attention to them served as a vent for the patriotic feelings of many of the older ladies. Our friend Mrs. Mason

particularly spent a large portion of her time ministering to their wants, which were liberally supplied by the Federal authorities; and many a poor boy who must have died for want of stimulants and luxuries necessary to his low condition, revived under the new regime.

The miserable pallets which were the best couches which the Confederate hospital stores could supply, were exchanged for stretchers whereon the poor sufferers could rest in comparative comfort; and the surgeons attended the sick with the same kindness and attention as they gave to their own men.

In these sad times when passion ruled, and man is apt to present himself to our view in his worst aspect, it is refreshing to catch glimpses of his better nature peering through the darkness like a single star in a cloudy sky. And rampant as were bitterness and rancor in the hearts of men and women on both sides of this fearful contest, it is remarkable that they never entered the presence of those great levelers, sickness, suffering, and death. Here the white flag of peace waved; here an armistice was declared, and man ministered to his brother, striving to revive in him the flame of life, which, fanned into strength by his care, he would remorselessly destroy on the next battle-field.

Notwithstanding these alleviations in the lot of our Winchester friends, I would not lead you to understand that their hearts underwent any change of affection for or loyalty to the cause of the South. It was but a taste of the flesh-pots of Egypt after long abstinence, and daily loving thoughts followed the little band of Confederates, and prayers ascended to heaven for their preservation. The hardest trial which the inhabitants

of a captured town have to bear, probably, is the impossibility of obtaining any information relative to absent friends; and this was felt keenly in Winchester, for although the air was full of rumors, no reliable intelligence had reached them of the army since its departure, and the sound of a gun was sufficient to raise a report that Ashby was in the neighborhood.

"How delightful it would be," said Julia Bell to Ellen Randolph, "if the dear Confeds would only come down and seize all of these stores; it would do the poor fellows so much good after their hard fare."

"I heard to-day," said Ellen, lowering her voice to a whisper, although there was no danger at all of her being overheard, but it adds a zest to a feminine communication when it is made in a confidential, mysterious tone—"I heard to-day—but don't mention it to a human being—that General Jackson had been reinforced and was coming right back here again."

"How did you hear it?"

"I can't tell you that, but it is true; the source is perfectly reliable."

"I'll never tell; I think you might tell me."

"Well, if you never breathe it to a soul—now mind," said Ellen, with increasing mystery.

The solemn promise being given, she continued in a whisper so low that her companion had to put her ear close to hear at all.

"One of our men is in town!" A pause to see the effect of the information; it was gratifying in the start with which it was received, but the exclamation which followed aloud "In town!" called forth a reproof.

"Sh——h," said Ellen, excitedly; "don't talk so loud. Yes, he came in last night and is concealed in a

house: he says our men will be here in a very few days."

"What is he doing here?" asked Julia.

"Taking notes," said Ellen, "for General Jackson's benefit; he is one of Ashby's men."

"I wish I could see him!" exclaimed Miss Bell.

Before the evening was over, the information so cautiously given had been whispered quite as mysteriously to a dozen other friends, and they in their turn conveyed it to others, so that before night the story reached the Federal authorities, transformed thus: That a young officer of General Ashby's cavalry had made his way into the town to see Miss Randolph, to whom he was supposed to be engaged. The young lady, appreciating at its worth the peril run in her behalf, had concealed him in her mother's house, where he was now enjoying himself. He had brought the information that General Jackson with an army of forty thousand men was bearing down upon Winchester with his usual rapidity of movement, which celerity would surround the town by morning. Of course the story was a startling one, and its results to our communicative young lady rather unexpected.

About nine o'clock at night there was a loud and emphatic ring at Mr. Randolph's door-bell. The unusual summons startled the family not a little, and some time elapsed before it was decided how it should be answered.

"I declare," said Mrs. Randolph, with her hand on her heart, "I would go, but my heart is beating so I am afraid I would faint. Sister Annie, suppose you go."

"Well," said Mrs. Mason, rather tremulously, it must

be confessed. "Oh yes, I'll go. I am not afraid; it isn't anybody I know. Maybe one of my poor boys is worse," and she took up the candle and went towards the door.

"There it is again!" said Ellen as the bell was pulled impatiently twice, quickly followed by a violent knock on the door which sounded through the house.

"Good gracious! what can it be?" said Mrs. Mason, setting down the candle and sinking into a chair.

"Well, some one will have to go," said Ellen, taking up the candle, "or they will batter the door down. Who is it?" she called from the end of the passage.

A loud knock was the only answer.

"Come back, Ellen," said her mother, seizing her skirt.

"Come on, let's all go and make them answer," said Ellen.

"Open the window-shutter and talk through the window," suggested Mrs. Mason, which suggestion was adopted, and the light of the adamantine candle shone upon three very pallid faces as the shutter was thrown open. It also made visible to them a crowd of dark figures in the porch and on the pavement.

"What do you want?" demanded Mrs. Mason.

"We have orders to search your house," said one of the party.

"Search our house!" ejaculated all three voices at once. "For what?"

"You never mind for what; you must open the door."

"Oh, sir," said Mrs. Randolph, "we are only a party of ladies. Do wait until to-morrow."

"Not likely," said the man, laughing. "We would rather take the chance of finding what we want to-night."

"I give you the word of a lady, gentlemen," said Mrs. Mason, "that we will not move anything until you come to-morrow, if you will only wait until daylight."

Her request was met by a peal of laughter, and one of the men was heard to say:

"Truthful old lady that! But we ain't green; we wasn't born yesterday, we knows Rebel women."

"Is their no gentleman in the party," said Ellen Randolph indignantly, "to whom ladies can appeal for protection? We certainly will not be forced to let a parcel of rough men into the house at this hour of night."

An officer stepped forward and raised his hat. "I assure you, madam," he said, "that I would gladly escape a disagreeable duty, but the authorities have received information that you have a Rebel officer concealed in this house, who has brought important information to the town, and we are commissioned to search the house for him."

"I assure you, sir, that you are misinformed," said Mrs. Mason.

"Forgive me, madam," said the officer, "but I cannot take a lady's word here. We know your sex will sacrifice everything for the Rebel cause."

"Except truth," said Mrs. Mason.

"Perhaps so," he said, smiling; "but our orders are peremptory. Your house is surrounded now, and you will be so kind as to open the door. I will guarantee you against any further annoyance than is absolutely necessary."

There was no appeal from this, and the fastenings of the door were withdrawn. About a dozen men walked into the hall and looked curiously around. Ellen shrank sensitively away, feeling her household gods outraged by this invasion of her home. She observed, too, that she was the object of curious, significant glances, and heard one soldier whisper to another:

"That's the gal he came after, I guess. Can't say I blame him."

Meanwhile the search proceeded, and was not wanting in thoroughness. Every nook and corner was looked into without discovering any one.

"This is my daughter's room," said Mrs. Randolph, putting her hand on the door as they were about to enter; "it surely is not necessary for all of these men to search her room."

The officer's face flushed as he turned and bade all but one man to stand in the hall.

"Rather an unlikely looking harbor for a Rebel soldier, I must say," said he as he entered, glancing round at the exquisite neatness of the young lady's apartment, with its white window-curtains, pretty bright silk quilt, and old mahogany furniture.

"I should think so," said Ellen indignantly.

"There is no knowing what your sex can be up to though," said the man, trying the door of the wardrobe, "Why, I knew a lady once who hid her lover in her wardrobe. I'll be glad to have your keys, ma'am."

Ellen handed them over, very much disgusted.

"Don't touch my clothes," she said passionately, as he proceeded to turn aside the soft white skirts which hung within; "I'll move everything and let you see," and with flaming cheeks and flashing eyes she pro-

ceeded to remove the clothing, and showed conclusively that no one was hidden within.

"I'm sorry, ladies," said the officer with unmoved serenity, "but the necessities of war," and he turned over the mattress of the bed.

"Go down stairs, Ellen," said Mrs. Randolph; "it is not necessary for you to stay here."

"I'd rather not, mamma; I'll try and stand it," said Ellen, forcing back the tears of mortification and anger which filled her eyes.

The search was at length over, and with reiterated apologies the party took their departure, leaving behind them three bitter enemies. I ought to make an exception in favor of Mrs. Mason, who said, in answer to Ellen's passionate expressions of indignation, "My dear child, you know they can't help it; they are obliged to obey orders."

"Aunt Annie, please don't excuse them," said Ellen, taking away her handkerchief from her tear-stained face, and gesticulating excitedly with it; "there certainly can be no apology for their coming into our house this time of night,—great rough men, and going into our very bed-rooms to look for concealed men. I declare it is too humiliating! Mamma, please have everything changed in my bed to-night. The idea of that man's touching it! I never will get over it, never! I never will feel the same in that room again."

"That is very foolish, Ellen," said her mother, though in her heart she thought it perfectly natural. "Of course your room shall be fixed, but you shall not go back there to-night. You must come and stay with me."

But Ellen continued to weep and scold without intermission until Mrs. Mason said:

"I was so much afraid of their discovering our hiding-place. I felt quite tremulous when they came near it."

It seemed to be quite a pleasant suggestion to the young lady, for suddenly looking up, her eyes brightening through her tears, she said, bringing her hand emphatically upon the table:

"Yes, thank goodness for that! it is a comfort to think that we fooled them after all. They would have been perfectly delighted if they could only have discovered our stores."

CHAPTER XII.

"A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And airy tongues that syllable men's names."— MILTON.

"WHAT can be the meaning of all this confusion?" said good Mrs. Mason, stopping as she was going to her hospital one day, and standing close against the wall to escape the confused mass of human beings who were dashing down the street in wild excitement.

As she asked the question of herself, it was unsatisfactory. Just then a company of infantry was passing, and the Captain stopping beside her for a moment, she said politely:

"Perhaps you will be so good as to tell me the meaning of all this confusion?"

The man turned round, and seeing the old lady, raised his cap while he answered:

"Only a little fright that daring Rebel, General Ashby, has given us. He actually dashed down the street of the town, a bit ago, with three men — think of it, ma'am, with three men into this town, where we have ten thousand men and more! But you need not be alarmed, ma'am, the town is perfectly safe. He has only his few cavalry with him."

"I am not at all afraid of him," said Mrs. Mason, smiling.

"Well, he is a brave fellow, that Ashby, I must say,

if he is a Rebel; and it certainly was one of the most dashing things I ever saw. I saw it, ma'am, myself. I was standing on the corner of the street when I saw about a dozen of our cavalry come tearing down the street like mad, and behind them these four men; and our men were actually pale, ma'am."

"And what did you do?" asked Mrs. Mason.

"Who, I? Oh, I came on at once for my company; but I doubt whether he will be there when we get back."

"No," said Mrs. Mason, "I doubt whether he will wait for you."

"I am confident that he will not; but if he would, we would teach him a lesson he would not soon forget."

"I dare say; but it takes a good many teachers for so few scholars," said Mrs. Mason, laughing.

Her exulting tone struck sudden conviction to the young Captain, and at once recognising the fact that he had been talking to a Southern woman, and ministering to her feelings of pride in this Valley-hero so unconsciously, a broad smile broke over his face, ending in a hearty laugh; and as he raised his cap and ran down the street after his company, he said:

"Sold, ma'am, this time; but it is all true, every word of it. Good evening."

As to Mrs. Mason, she went on to her hospital, chuckling with delight at the cheering drop of news she would have for her poor boys at the hospital. But her bright countenance fell somewhat when she entered the long, low room which was given up to the Confederate hospital, and saw about a dozen men clustered around a stretcher which had its position near the door by which she entered.

"What is it; is Charlie worse?" she said as the men made room for her to pass, and she knelt beside a poor shadow of manhood, or boyhood, which lay thereon.

He could not have been more than eighteen at most, though death often brings back the youthful appearance with it. His light flaxen hair lay matted against his damp forehead, through the pure whiteness of which the blue veins showed clearly; his brown eyes were half unclosed in half sleeping and half waking, but their fast-glazing balls told that the final sleeping and the final waking were not far off.

"Why, my boy," said Mrs. Mason, kneeling beside him, and taking his transparent hand in hers, "what is it; when did this change take place?"

The brown eyes unclosed and turned upon her with a joyful look of recognition as he said in feeling accents, "Mother! mother!"

The tears sprang to Mrs. Mason's eyes as she bent over him and said:

"Shall I write to your mother for you?"

A look of disappointment crossed the dying face as he said:

"Oh, I thought I was at home in the veranda, and the smell of the orange-trees and the magnolia was so sweet," and his eyes glanced around the bare walls and closed, as if words were inadequate to express the contrast between his dream and the reality.

Mrs. Mason put a spoon containing wine to his mouth. He swallowed it, and again turned to her.

"You know me, don't you, Charlie?"

"Yes, ma'am, I know you now. Thank you, ma'am."

"You don't feel so well to-day?" said Mrs. Mason.

"Well — I think I would be right well if I could

only be at home with mother and the girls. I think I am a little home-sick," and a pitiful attempt to smile at the unmanly confession crossed the poor, thin, worn face. "It seems to me if I could just have one drink out of the spring that is near our house, it would quench my thirst better than a whole fountain of water here." His voice was becoming quite strong in his earnestness, and the glazed eye brightened into life again for an instant, as if even the thought of home had the power to bring back the ebbing tide to the heart.

"And," he went on, "I feel so sorry for my poor mother; she must be so uneasy about me. You see I am all the boy she has; and three girls. There! that's right. I feel like it was her hand now. That's just the way she used to smooth back my hair. And could you just kiss me there if you please, ma'am, just for my mother's sake, you know."

Mrs. Mason stooped over and kissed his forehead. "But, Charlie," she said, "though your mother and sisters are so far away, you know that there is a Friend beside you still."

He turned a grateful look on her.

"No, not I," said she, interpreting his expression; "but don't you know how often I have told you about *Jesus*, the sinner's friend, who loved you so much that He died for you, and now offers you rest from all your sickness and weariness — a home for the homeless, and life for the dead. He says, 'Come unto me all ye that weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Oh, Charlie, my boy, take Him for your Saviour! cling to Him now in this sad hour!"

He but half comprehended her last appeal, as he showed by stretching out his hands as if he would grasp tangible help offered.

She took his hand and held it, and said, "Not that way, my boy; but listen to me, Charlie. If you were lying wounded and thirsting upon a battle-field, and one were to come to you and offer you cool, clear water, such as flows from your spring at home, would you not take it?"

"Yes, oh yes!"

"Then just so your Saviour offers your thirsty soul the water of life. Will you not accept it? will you not, dear boy? will you not?" and she leant over him and spoke in his ear, as he was gone so far into the Valley of the Shadow of Death that her voice scarce reached the thither side, and she only caught the words:

"Yes — Jesus! — rest! — mother! — home!"

"Oh, boys," said Mrs. Mason, turning her tear-stained face to the awe-struck soldiers who stood around, "take warning while you may. Your hour may come as his has. Have Jesus for your support; enlist in His army and you are safe — He always conquers."

It was touching to see them gathering around to hear her simple sermon, the solemn commentary upon which lay so still and white before them. Great bronzed men with a gray hair here and there, and young men, some with the "lingering light of their boyhood's grace" still about them, knelt with her there, nor was there a dry eye or a quiet heart amongst them while her sweet voice rose in supplication for them. Save one! and he in his silence a most impressive teacher for the rest.

CHAPTER XIII.

"When Greeks joined Greeks, then came the tug of war."

NATHANIEL LEE.

THE position of the Confederate army at Manassas was one of great interest and peril. The United States, profiting by their late lesson, were gathering their forces most vigorously; able officers were appointed to the various commands, and the prosecution of the war was determined upon a far more energetic scale than heretofore. They had underrated the strength and endurance of the Southern troops, but since "Greek met Greek" this was no longer the case, and General Johnston found it necessary to contract his line of defence by drawing the enemy further inward from his supplies, as something towards equalising the relative strength of the two armies. But to accomplish his task required all of his thought and wariness. Did the Federals once suspect his design, they might precipitate an attack which would not only be fatal to his army, but to the Confederate capital and even to the Southern cause. So the greatest secrecy was maintained about all of his movements; daily the railroad trains were quietly packed with stores, but the constant activity along the lines and apparent preparation for a forward move kept suspicion away. The large army at Winchester, however, under Shields and Banks, gave General Johnston more disquiet than even the larger one in front of him, because they were really in his

rear, and by making a forced march across the mountains, as General Jackson had done prior to the battle of Manassas, they could place him between two powerful armies and inevitably crush him. That this was their intention he had every reason to know; and he had daily reports from Winchester of indications leading to this move. In his dilemma General Johnston sent a dispatch ordering General Jackson, if possible, to engage Banks's army so as to prevent this movement, though he had no men to send to assist in the effort.

General Jackson was not a man to look at second causes. He knew the danger to be imminent, and he knew also that his small force was outnumbered three or four times at least by Banks in Winchester, but even under these circumstances he determined to make an attack. Nor did he despair of victory; he knew that there was *One* who could if He pleased give it to him; could make "one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight." He found when he had turned towards Winchester that there was no time to be lost; the dreaded movement had already commenced. A large portion of the force of General Banks were moving in the direction of Manassas.

Ashby's dash into Winchester, of which we have already given some account, was made to draw out the force from the town in order that they might be able to judge of the numbers they would have opposed to them. It was eminently successful, as the entire Federal force, as if in obedience to his summons, was drawn out around the town. A slight skirmish took place, in which General Shields, the Federal commandant of the post in conjunction with General Banks, had his right arm broken by a chance shell.

The next morning the battle of Kernstown commenced. It took its name from a small hamlet about four miles from Winchester, around which a considerable part of the battle was fought.

It was probably one of the most desperately and well-contested battles of the war. General Jackson always spoke of it as such. The disparity of numbers was fearful, but notwithstanding this fact the field was contended for during the entire day, and the result uncertain.

To describe the anxiety of the people of Winchester would be impossible; they knew that the Stonewall Brigade was engaged, and the Stonewall Brigade included all of the young men from the town and country round. The firing was terrible; the booming of the cannon was so continuous that it sounded like crashing thunder. Nor was the illusion destroyed by a nearer view, as the flashes which preceded the discharges were fearful. But the crackling of the musketry was even a more dreadful sound than the cannonading; it lasted without intermission for hours. Every house-top was covered with anxious listeners in various attitudes, expressive of their overwhelming agony of suspense. This was somewhat alleviated by the evident dismay and apprehension of the Federals, who rode about the streets collecting up the stragglers and hurrying them to the front, and by evening these symptoms increased so much that in the same proportion the spirits of the people revived.

"Our men will certainly be in by to-morrow morning," said Ellen Randolph, entering her mother's room with face flushed with excitement. She hesitated when she found that Mrs. Mason was on her knees, and Mrs.

Randolph with her Bible on her knee, each trying to draw their strength and support in the hour of fearful trial from the source of all strength.

"How do you know?" said both ladies, rising at the joyful intelligence.

"Well," said Ellen, "I was at the parlor window just now, with the shutters closed, listening for some news from the passers-by. The porch was full of stragglers, one of whom called out to a cavalryman who dashed up the street: 'What news from the battle-field?' 'News!' he said, riding up to the pavement, 'the news is that every one of you ought to be out on the field. I am ordered to gather up all the men about town, and form them into a company and march them out. The fact is we have been flanked, and if some relief does not come in a very short time we will have to retreat. So come on, every man of you!'" And Ellen danced around the room in great excitement.

"My child," said Mrs. Randolph, "you forget what suffering may come to us, even with a victory."

Ellen stopped. "Indeed, Mamma," she said, "I forgot everything in the triumph."

Night fell at last, and everything was ominously quiet. None of the inhabitants were allowed to go out of their houses after nightfall, so that there was no possibility of hearing anything, though every one continued full of hope until about nine o'clock, when the sound of the military bands playing "Yankee Doodle" at headquarters fell like a knell upon every heart, and the night was passed in all the agony of suspense. Unable to bear it any longer, at the first dawn of day Ellen Randolph rose and determined to go out and find out something. Issuing from the front door, she could see,

to her surprise, figures of her own sex passing and repassing in the distance, and occasionally a blue uniform.

Hastening down the street, she encountered a friend with tear-stained face, wringing her hands as she hastened on.

"What is the matter?" she said breathlessly, as she overtook her.

"Matter!" was the answer, in a hollow tone of despair; "don't you know that Jackson's command has been cut all to pieces, and those who are not killed are taken prisoners. The jail, warehouses, and churches are used as prisons for our dear ones. I am just going to hunt for my three boys. I don't know whether they are dead or prisoners." And she wrung her hands again in the extremity of her misery.

Ellen staggered for an instant under the force of the blow, and then hurried on with her companion.

It was even so; they had entered Winchester, but as prisoners. There were comparatively few deaths, however, as a portion of the command had been surrounded and captured entire.

During the day the streets were thronged with women looking in the different prisons for their friends, or seeking information of them from the prisoners.

"Can you tell me anything of John Aylet, of the 2nd Virginia?" asked a poor, anxious-looking mother of some prisoners who stood at the open window of one of the houses used as a prison.

"John Aylet, of the 2nd Virginia? Oh yes, he is somewhere here — wounded, I think."

"Wounded! where?"

"Not bad, I think, ma'am; but he fought by me, and I saw him fall."

Off hurried the poor woman to resume her search.

"Charlie, Charlie, there you are, thank God!" said another, recognising a brother. "I have been afraid to ask anybody about you; and to think you can't come out — it does seem too hard."

"Might have been worse, Sue," was the cheerful answer. "I tell you it was an awful fight, and many a fine fellow bit the dust; and then to be whipped after all!"

"You made a brave fight though, against fearful odds. I am proud of it."

"For goodness sake, Sue, get us something to eat. We have had nothing since yesterday morning, and are almost starved."

This intimation was enough, and soon the women hurried from place to place with baskets of provision, which they were allowed to pass in at the windows. It was a relief to be able to serve them, and they considered it a favor that they should be permitted to do so.

Indeed, either from policy, which at this stage of the war dictated an indulgent course to the people, or from a desire to be relieved from the trouble of supplying the wants of their prisoners, no interference was made with the action of the citizens in this matter. They were also allowed to take the wounded home to their houses, that they might nurse them.

"Mr. Dallam! Captain Williams!" exclaimed Ellen Randolph, stopping short upon hearing her name called and recognising these two gentlemen.

"Even so, Miss Randolph," said the last-named gentleman; "fairly caught and caged."

"What have you got in that basket, Miss Ran-

dolph?" said Mr. Dallam. "Something to eat, I hope; for I am actually starved."

Ellen quickly handed the basket up to them, and saw its contents distributed to about a dozen men in the room with them.

"What is the news from Rose Hill?" asked she, as they employed themselves in the destruction of the viands.

"I made a dash there the other day," said Mr. Dallam; "found all well, but rather melancholy at the prospect of parting from Mr. Holcombe, who goes to Richmond in a few days to take a post appointment. Your cousin, Miss Mary, is all right. I looked in vain for the qualities you gave her credit for the other day. I know her better than you do," laughing triumphantly.

"Maybe so," said Ellen; "it is too early to decide that matter. How long are you all to be permitted to stay in town?"

"We leave for Baltimore this afternoon, I think," said Captain Williams. "But we will be exchanged very soon, I expect, as we have the majority of prisoners now, and they are glad to exchange."

"I wish we could be exchanged," said Ellen ruefully.

"Never mind; next time we come I hope we will release you," said Mr. Williams. "We tried hard this time, but they were too many for us."

They were marched to the cars under guard that afternoon, and the last sight of them the ladies had were bright familiar faces looking and smiling at them from the dreary box-cars. Captain Williams managed to whisper to Ellen Randolph before he left:

"If you should see your cousin before I do, say to her that I am here thus and now in fulfillment of my promise to her, to which, God helping me, I will be faithful."

Many times did Ellen ponder this message over, but wanted a key to the mystery involved. It was not until a long, long time afterwards that it was furnished to her.

We know now, what was only known at the time to those who were masters of the situation, that the object which General Jackson proposed to accomplish by this desperate battle was fully attained. Several regiments which had actually started towards Manassas were ordered back to Winchester, and General Johnston fell back to a new line of defence without the lost of a single man or a dollar's worth of property. It was considered one of the most masterly retreats of the war, but must have failed disastrously had it not been for the sacrifices made on the battle-field of Kernstown.

CHAPTER XIV.

"How fading are the joys we dote upon!
Like apparitions seen and gone;
But those which soonest take their flight
Are the most exquisite and strong;
Like angels' visits, short and bright,
Mortality's too weak to bear them long."

JOHN NORRIS.

A CHRONICLER is a privileged individual; he is, in fact the greatest sovereign in the universe. Defying time and space, he traverses continents by a stroke of his pen, and

"Makes a moment of a rolling age."

He makes and unmakes at will, creates men and women to represent *his* ideas, and incidents to serve his ends. With equal ease he shares the throne of the king and the fireside of the peasant. He waves a wand, and riches spring out of the earth, or "take themselves wings and flee away;" flowers bloom at his bidding, and the clouds empty themselves upon the earth. With impertinent boldness he dives into the most sacred privacies of a household, and drags into the broad light of day the most secret motives. He arrogates to himself the right to sit in judgment upon actions, and permits no appeal from his decisions. He but speaks, and war desolates the earth or peace smiles again. In a word, his power is unlimited save by thought, and his rule untrammelled over the empire of ideas.

Claiming a small portion of these my rights, I again transport my reader to Rose Hill. It has undergone some changes since we last looked upon it. Nature does not smile so broadly as she once did. The fields lie neglected, and the uncut wheat droops its golden heads with shame. The cattle, too many of them, have gone to enrich the Confederate commissariat, which, like the insatiable daughters of the horse-leech, is ever crying Give! give! But still enough remains to preserve for the old place its air of elegant comfort and inviting hospitality; and the demands upon it in these times were not small. Every household was obliged to live in a state of preparation for visitors, nor would any one refuse to supply a soldier, so long as the larder contained a modicum of food.

"Margie, it is a curious fact, which I do not know that you have observed," said Mary Holcombe, entering the library where her sister sat at work, "but I never yet have seen a soldier who has had anything to eat for three days."

Margie laughed.

"Well, it is a fact," continued Mary; "great hearty-looking men come here, looking like Samsons for strength, and in the weakest voice say: 'I cum to see if I couldn't git a bite of something to eat; I ain't had a bite these three days.'"

"I am afraid we won't have a mouthful for a longer time than that if this goes on much longer," said Margie; "but poor fellows, I would rather go without any time and let them have it."

"Goodness, here comes another!" said Mary, looking from the window and descrying a man in the distance approaching the house on horseback. "Margie, if

another one comes to see if he can't 'git' something to eat, your newly avowed patriotism will be put to the test, as there is not a mouthful except our dinner now."

"That is an officer," said Margie, regarding the approaching horseman with attention. "I wish I could persuade myself that it was a large enough man to be my husband."

"Margie, can it be Mr. Williams?" said Mary, the blood rushing to her face in torrents.

"It is!" exclaimed her sister with sudden conviction; "the exchanges have been made then, and I suppose we may look for your beloved in a few days," and she turned teasingly towards Mary, to find her standing with her hand pressed upon her heart, as though to still its violent beating, while the blood, which a moment before had flooded face and throat, had receded, leaving her as colorless as the dead.

"Why, what is the matter, Mary?" exclaimed Mrs. Murray, starting to her feet.

The question was a relief, as it brought the tears to her eyes and broke the spell which would in another second have deprived her of consciousness.

"I don t know. I feel as if something dreadful had happened; I have not heard from Mr. Dallam for so long."

"You have had no chance of hearing," said Mrs. Murray, placing her in a chair and bathing her face in some cologne. "I think it is very foolish in you to allow yourself to be uneasy on any such ground as that; he is certainly safe as a prisoner."

"I know it is foolish," said Mary, wiping her eyes; "but I just felt a sudden terror as I saw Mr. Williams. But let us go and meet him."

She hung back, however, behind her sister, a painful recollection of their last parting contributing to the awkwardness of their present meeting.

"Why, how d'ye do, my friend?" said Mrs. Murray, greeting him warmly; "you are almost as welcome as my lord and master would be, because I can congratulate you upon your release. Tell us all about it; but first relieve the anxieties of this love-lorn damsel, who nearly fainted at the sight of you, because a certain Lieutenant we wot of was not with you."

Captain Williams raised his eyes to the fair young face, and if it had not been for her embarrassment which prevented her from looking steadily at him, she would have been startled at the expression of sorrowful tenderness which filled his eyes as he took her hand.

"Lieutenant Dallam is very well."

"Was he exchanged?" asked Margie.

"No — o — he has gone on a visit to his mother who is sick."

This was satisfactory, and Mary breathed more freely; but she was still silent and unlike herself, and avoided looking at Captain Williams, while every now and then his kind eyes would seek hers with that same expression of tender solicitude.

That he should be constrained and less cheerful than usual, Mary knew to be natural; and confident of her knowledge, she failed to suspect that there was anything more involved in it.

"Mamma is in Richmond with Papa," said Margie, answering Captain Williams' inquiry; "she will be back before long. But Papa still requires her so much that I don't know how she is ever to leave him. And

Eddy, too, thinks himself indispensable; he calls himself 'Papa's leg.'"

"Any news from Winchester?" asked Captain Williams.

"Yes, a long letter from Nell, which was smuggled through by some woman who came through the lines. She says that every one of their servants left them, and they have gone regularly to cooking. She gives a very amusing account of their condition the morning they left. The first notice they had of it, except a mere suspicion growing out of their devotion to the Yankees and their change of manner to themselves, was an army-wagon driving up to the door at daylight, and the entire family of domestics, eight in number, stepping out ready equipped for their departure. Aunt Mary went out and spoke to them, when they condescended to tell her good-bye. Of course no one made a remonstrance, it would have been useless; and besides, no one wanted them to stay under the circumstances — all confidence between the parties had been destroyed. But Ellen says that Aunt Annie bustled up at once, and announced that she was going down to get breakfast; and dressing herself in a wrapper and the most *cooky* apron she could find, she disappeared. In about half an hour after, Ellen followed her, and she says — but I will read what she says, as I cannot do justice to it:

"'Margie, you remember the stories we used to read about catching monkeys. A man goes under a tree full of monkeys and washes his hands, then fills the basin with tar and walks away. The imitative creatures at once come down and dip their paws in the basin, where the tar holds them and they are easily caught.

"'Well, when I got into the kitchen I was laughably reminded of this old story, as there stood dear old Aunty, the most disconsolate figure you ever saw, with her hands stuck in the dough which Sarah had made up the night before. She was perfectly helpless and miserable, not able to extricate herself or to go on. I laughed until I could not stand up, and at last had to get a knife and scrape her out of her difficulty. But they had the laugh on me afterwards, as I undertook to milk the cow; and if you could only have seen me! I always was afraid of a cow, and I would stand off at arm's-length and pat her and say, "So, Sukey! so, Sukey!" and if she turned her head I would jump back, perfectly sure she was going to resent my attentions in some way. Necessity knows no law, however, and down I had to come on my marrow-bones, and most tremblingly I commenced pumping away for milk; but not a drop came. There stood Mamma and Aunt Annie looking on, not knowing what to advise, and I red in the face from the exertion. My hands were cramped until I could hardly open them, and I was so stiff I couldn't get up from under the cow at all. In the end, however, she took the matter in hand, and quietly kicking me over, walked off to the corner of the yard and glowered at the whole party as if daring us to come near her again. We had to get a servant from the neighborhood to milk for us, and give her half the milk to pay her for it.'

"I went right down," said Mary, "and took lessons in bread-making and milking, very much to Mammy's indignation. But I do think we ought to learn to be perfectly independent in these times."

Mr. Williams smiled. "I hope you will never find

any use for your knowledge; but if you do, send for me, and I will make your bread for you. I don't think those hands look promising for hard work."

"If you could only see her at it, Mr. Williams," said Mrs. Murray. "She rolls up her sleeves to the shoulder, and begins by spreading the flour from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet; and her dough is always too wet or too dry, and then Dolly comes to the rescue and works it a little, and so at last it gets done, and Mary claims it as her bread."

"Ingratitude, thy name is Margaret Murray!" said Mary, joining in the laugh against herself. "After the incredible exertions I have made for the comfort of this family, to be treated in this way!"

Thus the day wore away in genial talk. In return for these glimpses the ladies furnished into their own experience, Captain Williams gave them graphic pictures of their life in the prison at Fort Delaware, but in his narrations Lieutenant Dallam's name was never mentioned. Mary did not expect it, and had her own way of accounting for the omission; but Margaret wondered over it a good deal. She was also struck with his depressed manner, and once or twice surprised him in the midst of some animated story she was telling looking very much as if he had not heard one word. As evening approached this absence of manner increased; and when she proposed that they should walk down to the sunset tree, he said quietly, but with a decision not to be mistaken or controverted, "I am going to ask you to let me take this young lady by herself," turning to Mary; "I have a good many messages to deliver which it would embarrass her to hear before a third party." She thought it a very natural proposal, and gladly went

off to look for her boy, feeling quite relieved that she was released from any obligation to absent herself longer from him.

Never did man feel more painful embarrassment than Captain Williams at the prospect of this interview. The furrows in his brow deepened, and the lines about his mouth became more marked as he joined Mary on the front porch. With the quickness which is one of woman's attributes she allowed none of this to escape her; but thinking she knew the reason why, she failed to take to heart the warning his manner offered to her. A feeling of feminine regret for his evident trouble, and pride that she should have been capable of inspiring so strong an affection in one so far beyond most of his compeers in all the qualities which go to make up and adorn a man's character, filled her breast, and mingled with surprise that he should show so little self-control in the mastery or concealment of his feelings, made her anxious to avoid a recurrence of their former painful interview. She therefore talked incessantly about everything and everybody, filled up her own pauses with laughter, and every now and then glanced wonderingly at the grave, sad-looking man who walked by her side saying not a word, but whose heart constantly repeated:

"How shall I ever say it! how shall I tell her!"

Deferring an evil is not curing it, however, and in his difficulty he began where he ought to have ended.

They had reached the shelter of the grove, where the trees grew sparsely, leaving space for the flickering light and shade to weave their fantastic shapes upon the green grass. Turning upon her abruptly, almost interrupting her in something she was saying, he said, taking a letter from his pocket:

"This is for you, Mary."

Eagerly she seized it, and as the flush on her cheeks mounted up to the roots of her hair, she said indignantly:

"Mine! how unkind to have kept it from me all this time."

At any other time her caressing touch of the senseless paper, showing how it was hallowed to her by the familiar handwriting, would have sent a pang to his heart, but he did not think of it.

Laying a detaining hand on hers, as she would have torn the envelope, he said:

"Not so unkind as you think, Mary; I have that to tell you, as a preparation for the reading of that letter, which I could not tell in the presence of a third party;" and as she looked at him wonderingly, he drew her forward to the grotto, and seating her on one of the stone seats, said:

"God knows, Mary, that to escape this office I would freely have laid down my life, but I could not send you that letter without coming with it and trying to temper the wind to this poor shorn lamb."

She looked at him with whitening cheeks, and her lips tried to form a query, but failed, and gave it up.

He went on: "He says, Mary, that it is for you he has acted throughout; perhaps you may think him right and thank him for it."

Her face was like the open pages of a book; the changes of thought and feeling flitting over it as rapidly and legibly as the eye glances over a thrilling story. He read now, "Ah, for me, for me! it is easy to forgive if it is for love of me—true loving heart!"

He let her dwell upon this for a moment; he could

not bear to quench the little rushlight of hope which was doing its best to illuminate her heart.

Laying his hand on her head—it was an action familiar to her from her childhood—he said, with a tone of yearning tenderness in his voice:

"My child! my little tender loving child! why cannot you be permitted to bask in the sunshine of life? Must you, too, go into the shadow, and must mine be the hand to cast it over you? Try to forget everything in our intercourse which would give you a distrust of me now. I come as a brother, with no thought of self, believe me, but with only my care for your happiness and good."

She looked frightened and puzzled, but smiled up at him, saying softly: "There is some dreadful mistake, I am sure; but I know he has done nothing to be really ashamed of. I could not live now if I had not that confidence in him."

He said nothing in answer to this but turning away his head, as if the sight of her changing face with clouds of feeling flitting over it would be more than he could stand, he went on talking rapidly, with oft-impeded utterance.

"It was only one week after we reached Fort Delaware, when he and myself were sitting together, that an old man, with long gray beard and hair, was ushered into the room. It was his father. Their meeting was affecting beyond description. The old man hung around his son's neck, weeping and entreating that he would return home with him, that his mother was near to death and longed for her eldest and best-beloved son. He showed him a few tremulous words written by her hand; they were merely: 'Come home, Henry, and

see your mother before she dies.' Still he remained firm. He could only go by taking the oath of allegiance, and nothing would ever induce him to do that."

Mary breathed as if a sudden cord about her heart had been loosened. Captain Williams, keenly alive to every movement from her, glanced at her for a second, and then again averting his face and moving farther from her, went on:

"He, that old gray-headed man, then with an eloquence worthy of a better cause, urged other considerations. He pictured the home which awaited him; with intimate knowledge of his tastes and disposition he pandered to all, and in that luxurious and happy life, you, Mary Holcombe, reigned paramount. Under present circumstances he could not marry you, but only sign that little paper, which lay there temptingly before him, and he would have it in his power to snatch you from the life of trial and hardship which is coming on the women of Virginia, and place you in an unassailable position of happiness and comfort. Here for the first time the poison began to work, and I, terrified at the indication, strove to administer an antidote. I represented that you, Mary, would rather share with him the humblest, most insecure home, would rather mourn him dead, than connect either him or yourself with any taint of dishonor."

"Dishonor!" exclaimed Mary Holcombe, starting to her feet and confronting him with flashing eyes and blazing cheeks: "how dare you, Sir, creep here like the serpent did to Eve, breathing your foul suspicions to me? How dare you connect the word dishonor with his most honored name? Oh that I should ever have claimed this man my friend! that for my whole life I

should have been thus deceived! But I see through it all now. I am neither blind, deaf, nor an idiot, thank God! I know your aim and end now; and let me tell you the result. I despise your insinuations; they have severed every tie which ever existed between us, and if I could honor and love Mr. Dallam more than I have done I should do it by contrast. There! now you know how I reject your hints. Dishonor! and Mr. Dallam!"

Mr. Williams staggered and reeled under these blows like a storm-tossed vessel, but riding the waves gallantly too; for although his face was pale and convulsed with grief, the gray eye which met that of the angry girl flinched not, but shone with conscious integrity. She stood like a gazelle at bay, so helpless and weak, but still unconquered, clinging to the life of her heart in spite of the hounds. She had nothing to oppose to the storm but the fragility and slenderness of the reed, whose only hope of safety is in bending low before the storm which would else uproot it and toss it a mere wreck and waif on the bosom of the foaming stream of life.

"Mary," he spoke with ineffable tenderness, though he withdrew further away from her, "I want you to know that whatever hopes I may have entertained with regard to you, they form no part of my life now. Had I continued to cherish them I would never have undertaken this mission. You had better read your letter. I have managed badly, I suppose, but I could do no better," and bending so as to avoid the branches which hung low over the front of the grotto, he withdrew from her sight, but remained at hand. She, left alone with all this maze of thoughts bewildering her brain, opened her letter and read:

"My Dearest,— If I had not the most unwavering confidence in your love and faithfulness, I should tremble in writing this letter." The white paper fluttered from her hand to her feet, and her breath came in gasps from between her purple lips. She picked it up and resumed :

"But I know you too well to have any fears. Your simple trustfulness has been your great charm to me, and I feel is the best guarantee which I can have for my life-long happiness. Circumstances have occurred which render my return to Virginia impracticable. My father is very old and requires me, and my mother's health is so bad that I ought not to leave her. There are other considerations also which I confess have influenced me. Your father refuses to allow us to marry so long as the war lasts, and perhaps he is right; but I cannot stand the separation from you any longer. The continual anxiety which I should suffer if you should be left in the enemy's lines would, I am convinced, run me mad. My father is anxious that we should be married at once, and has presented me with a house near his own, with everything we could desire to minister to our comfort and happiness. I cannot tell you how constantly my mind dwells upon this home, of which you will be the light, and where, surrounded by our books, music, paintings, and having each other, darling, we may promise ourselves as much happiness as earth ever allots to her children, and perhaps we may after a while persuade your father and sister to follow us to our quiet retreat. Of course I never could raise my hand against the South, *our South;* for my heart is as earnestly hers as it ever was.

"Don't let Williams persuade you that there is anything wrong in what I have done. Remember you have given me the right to judge for you, and in political affairs women do not know enough to judge for themselves.

"I shall see you as soon as the way is open, which I think will be very soon now, and hope to persuade you to return with me. Until then, good-bye.

"With the fondest, truest affection, yours,

"HENRY DALLAM."

It might have been three-quarters of an hour after that Mr. Williams, leaning against an old tree which had been half torn up from its roots, was roused from a profound reverie by hearing his name pronounced. Turning, he saw her waiting for him at the entrance of the grotto. Her hat was pulled down over her face, and as he walked beside her he saw that she staggered in her gait, went forward indeed blindly. Without a word he took her hand and placed it on his arm. The only thing which broke the stillness of the walk was an occasional sound from the bowed head, half sob, half sigh, which, coming from her heart, touched his. When they reached the house she turned to him, and without raising her head, said putting her hand in his:

"Mr. Williams, please forgive me; and thank you for your kindness to me. And, Mr. Williams, won't you tell Margie? I can't."

"What shall I tell her, Mary?"

"Tell her everything: that it is all over, and why," and in a moment she was gone.

He watched her slight figure going slowly up the

steps, clinging for support to the banisters, and longed to take her in his arms and comfort her, but—"better not! better not!" and he turned towards the library to look for Margie.

Mary was not seen again that evening, though Mrs. Murray went to her door and tried to obtain an entrance, but in vain; she answered through the closed door:

"I don't want to see any one now, Margie; please let me alone, and attend to supper for me."

But long after everybody had retired Margie was awakened by a knock at her door. Opening it, she found a white figure standing without, and Mary's arms were around her neck and her tears on her cheek.

"Margie, won't you let me sleep with you? it is so lonely and dark by myself, and I can't sleep." And so the two sisters lay down side by side as they had done in the days of their childhood, Margie's arms around the shivering form of her sister. Once she attempted consolation by words, telling her that it was fortunate that his lack of firm principles had been discovered in time to prevent her life-long misery. But it was like applying a blister to a sore, and Margie knew it when Mary's cold hands crept into hers, and she said, "Don't talk about it, please, Margie; I know it all, but I don't believe I can stand it."

HAPTER XV.

"Hail to the Chief who in triumph advances!"—Scott.

It is not my purpose, during the progress of this story, to touch upon the strategy of the war to any great extent, except so far as it is necessary to keep bright the links by which my chronicles hang together. For this purpose solely I must dwell a little more at length upon the events which led to the battle of Winchester, which followed close upon the heels of the battle of Kernstown.

Richmond was menaced on the side of the Peninsula by the immense army of General McClellan, while McDowell approached from Fredericksburg with thirty thousand men. For these two to form a junction was to beleaguer the capital and seal its fate. It was necessary to create a diversion, and General Jackson was selected for this purpose. His army was reinforced by Ewell and General Edward Johnson, and he was directed to conduct a stirring campaign in the Valley. His force consisted of about twelve thousand men, and opposed to him he had Fremont's force of fifteen thousand under Milroy and Schenck, at two places called McDowell and Franklin, in West Virginia, and Banks with fifteen thousand at Harrisonburg and Winchester. Detaching General Johnson, he sent him flying after Milroy and Schenck, both of whom were utterly routed. Then Ewell proceeded to perform the like service for Banks, but found that General was re-

treating on Strausburg. Following him down the Shenandoah Valley, he was joined at New Market by General Jackson, who, instead of continuing with him, dashed through a gap in the mountain, at that place, into the Massanuttan Valley; and scarcely had General Banks reached Strausburg and concentrated his gaze upon General Ewell, who menaced him in front, when he was startled by the thunder of General Jackson's guns at Front Royal, a little town at the foot of the Massanuttan Mountain, on a line with Strausburg, and only ten miles off. His situation was perilous in the extreme. If General Jackson succeeded in throwing his force between him and Winchester, he would be enclosed between the two bodies of troops, and forced to surrender; so making all the haste he could, he dashed down the turnpike towards Winchester. Nor had he any time to lose; for General Jackson succeeded in cutting his wagon-train in two, capturing half of it, besides taking a considerable number of prisoners.

Of these to them deeply interesting events, the people of Winchester were in profound ignorance. They had so often been cheated by Dame Rumor that they dubbed her a lying jade, and refused to credit her reports. But when the flying army of General Banks dashed into the town on the afternoon of the 23d of May, they knew there must be some Confederate force in the neighborhood. Indeed, when pressed upon the subject, the Yankees admitted that they had encountered Ewell; but as he had only five thousand men, he could not venture to encounter the force collected at Winchester.

The town presented a strange picture of confusion

and excitement. The streets were blocked up with wagons, which, rushing in pell-mell, had crowded one on the other until it required no little skill to extricate them. Officers covered with dust, the perspiration pouring from their faces, and their horses bearing the marks of the stampede, were everywhere visible. All faces gathered blackness except those of the citizens, which brightened in like proportion, though they dared not make any public demonstration of their renewed hopes. They found that as the excitement increased, indeed, they were obliged to retire to their houses, as in one or two cases the common soldiers resented even their smiles.

The night was one long to be remembered. The sound of the locomotive breaking through the darkness mingled with the confused noise of women entreating to be permitted to leave before the fight, companies of cavalry dashing through the town, and artillery companies making their way to the front, while a continuous stream of army wagons, taking off such stores as could be hastily collected in the direction of Martinsburg, filled the road.

There were so few men left in the town amongst the citizens that the females in this time of peculiar excitement stood greatly in need of protection. In the power of a hostile force, smarting under an ignominious defeat, and expecting to join battle again in the morning, there was of course a lack of military discipline, a recklessness, which rendered the situation of these helpless non-combatants almost desperate. This was particularly the case with the three ladies on Fort Hill, as their house stood somewhat isolated, at the entrance of the town, and in the midst of the encamp-

ments of the soldiers. It is no wonder that their hearts grew darker with the darkness, and they looked forward to the long night with inexpressible dread. This reached a point of agony when about ten o'clock a regiment of calvary surrounded the house, and tying their horses to the palings around the grounds, proceeded to make themselves at home in the yard and lower part of the building. Poor Mrs. Mason fell on her knees and committed them in their weakness and helplessness to God. He who shut the mouths of the lions and delivered His children from the fiery furnace could and would care for them; and the result justified her faith; for although this mass of lawless soldiery forcibly entered the house and took possession, although these helpless females were utterly in their power, with not even a locked door between them, they were perfectly unmolested. Afraid to call attention to their presence by a light, they sat up in the middle of a bed together in the darkness during the entire night, every now and then drawing more closely together as the clanking of the sabres below renewed their consciousness of danger; and as the blackness of darkness changed to the gray tint of early morning, they looked curiously into each other's faces to see if the horrors of the night had not wrought some dreadful change in them. With the dawning of the day their cavalry guests mounted and rode off, and the three watchers sunk down exhausted; but they were scarce relieved from the terror which for so many hours had harassed them, when the sound of cannonading broke upon their ears, and hastily dressing, they rushed to the top of the house to see what was going on. The scene beggars description. There on one

side was the life and death contest raging fiercely, while the streets of the town and the roads leading out of it were already full of fugitives — negroes, with great bundles on their heads and dragging children by the hands. Here would be a child crying for its mother, and next a mother wringing her hands over the loss of her child. Stragglers from the army fled madly away. Every minute the panic increased, and when the Confederates dashed over the hill and down into the town with bayonets drawn, the rout became universal — men with pallid faces tearing off whatever impeded their rapid progress, until the road was carpeted with knapsacks and clothing of every kind. Here came a horse flying in spite of the burden of three he bore; next a piece of artillery covered with men; overloaded, the wheel came off, and cutting the traces of the horses, up the men mounted and off again, whilst those who were so unfortunate as to have no such mode of locomotion, made the best use of their heels they could.

"Oh, Mamma," said Ellen, "this is horrible!"

"Dreadful indeed," was the answer; "only see the white faces of the men! And this is a panic! God defend us from ever witnessing another, particularly one in which our own men are stricken."

But now the gray begins to mingle with the blue in the distance; they are fighting through the streets. Writhing figures and still figures begin to clog the pavements. Every now and then a flying figure would fall, and the pursuer stopping, would draw a cover over the face of that dead whom he himself had made dead. At last a company of infantry, almost entire and in better order than any who had preceded them, came

up the street, but as they reached the corner they huddled together like sheep. Danger here, danger there, danger menacing in every direction; they crowded one upon another, but none would go forward, until some officers, dashing up the hill with drawn swords in hand, drove them before them until they reached the open country, and then they fled rapidly enough.

"Look," said Mrs Mason, pointing to the street directly below them. Horror! there were about a dozen warehouses which had been used for commissary stores, and now the lurid flames were bursting from the roofs of all. In another moment the heat of the flames reached them where they stood, and black masses of smoke enveloping the mass of human beings, rendered more gloomy the gloomy scene. But the fugitives took no heed of the fire; they were only intent on escaping from the shot and shell which every moment came nearer.

"Let us go down," said Mrs. Mason. "I have seen three men fall on our pavement; we may be of some use." They were but a moment in following this suggestion, another in making up their minds to open the front door; but they started back, to find it full of men.

"The uniform, the gray!" said Ellen. "Are you the Confederates, really?"

"Oh yes, Miss," said one of the men, laughing; "I hope you don't take us for nothin' else. But you ain't sorry, is you?" for Ellen was crying heartily.

"General Jackson! General Jackson!" exclaimed Mrs. Mason, as she rushed out of the house and almost threw herself under his horse's feet.

Yes, there he was indeed, with his face beaming with

the excitement and gratification at his reception, with his hat in hand, returning the greetings from the crowds who thronged the streets and the houses.

"Why, Nell! how d'ye do?" and Ellen found herself seized in the arms of a great brown animal, boasting a beard and covered with dust. It was John Holcombe.

"My dear George," said Mrs. Randolph, throwing herself into the arms of her brother. "Are all safe? is Mr. Randolph coming?"

"All safe I think, thank God!" said Mr. Holcombe. "So all your negroes have left you. Ungrateful creatures! I did not believe they would."

Mrs. Mason was already in the street dressing wounds, and the pavement was spotted with blood.

"Look here, do you see that the town is on fire?" said a young man to Ellen Randolph.

"Oh yes," she said; "they set it on fire as they left."

"Where is the powder?" he asked.

"Powder!" she ejaculated, with whitening cheek. "There!" pointing in the direction of the fire. She remembered having heard a few days before that General Banks had been remonstrated with about endangering the town by keeping the magazine in it. The news spread like wildfire, and a crowd soon rushed off to the conflagration to try to avert this terrible catastrophe. They were just in time; ten minutes later and rejoicing would have been turned into mourning, as that mass of human beings would have been blown to pieces.

Soon the ladies discovered the fact that the poor fellows were almost starved, and every house emptied itself into the streets, so far as its larder was concerned at any rate. Nothing was too good for the soldiers;

buckets of milk and baskets of bread and meat were handed amongst the crowd. The pursuit was still continued, and the men had to snatch food as they passed along.

"Ah, Captain Williams, welcome to Winchester!" said Ellen, extending both hands to that gentleman as he approached her: "I must say you are all the more welcome for not being a cousin; for I have kissed a thousand dirty boys, more or less, this morning, and am perfectly choked with the dust."

"I wouldn't do it," said the Captain.

"I might refuse at another time," said Ellen; "but to-day cousins are privileged."

"Aunt Annie," said Dr. George Holcombe, after receiving and giving a joyful greeting all around, "if you and Aunt Mary want really to be of use, get your bonnets and go out to the battle-field; that is if you think you have nerve to stand the sad sights which will meet you there."

Of course they went at once, having supplied themselves with lint, bandages, and food for the poor sufferers.

Oh the sights and sounds that met them upon that dismal battle-field! Misery unmitigated even by the triumph. What description was ever adequate to convey an idea of its horrors? Language fails, or only repeats again and again, Death! death! death! death dreadful! death dire! The conflict between man and his brother has ceased, but in its place on the same field two great kings strive for the mastery; Life and Death are fighting it out through the length and breadth of the plain, the one triumphing by groans, shrieks, prayers and imprecations, and the other by a

silence more dreadful still. Each of the royal contestants is clad in right royal crimson, and the royal hue is pervading in everything around. The grass, emulating the fashion, has covered over her fresh green robe with it. The flowers, leaving the variety which Nature loves, are all of the same hue; and even the bird of the air, attracted by the strange sight, dipping down to earth in curious mood, wings its flight back to the clouds with feathers tipped with red.

The two ladies stood horror-struck at the sight which met their eyes. They were standing at the foot of a hill at the entrance of the town where the fiercest struggle had been made. They remembered that it was here they had seen the bayonet-charge of the morning which had virtually ended the battle; and the ground from where they stood up to the top of the hill was almost covered with figures, men and horses in close companionship, uniforms of blue and gray mingling upon their vision, a dreadful companionship in suffering and death. Here were two men, a Confederate and a Federal, locked together, motionless, with arms twined the one around the other. The strange sight attracted their notice, and it required no more than the ordinary amount of keenness to read the story. Beside them, covered with blood, lay a bayonet and a sword, and beneath the shoulder of the Federal was a gash which would have fitted the point of the first-named weapon. With their mind's eye they saw the wound given; but death did not at once ensue. Turning upon his opponent, sword in hand, so suddenly as to deprive him of his weapon, he had closed with him in the death-struggle. There must have been a wonderful amount of strength left in the

wounded man, from the power with which his short sword had been sent into the bosom of his enemy, not once, but four or five times; and their blood had gushed out, mingling in one stream and lying in one puddle under them. Together their lives had been rendered up, and together they went to the bar of God to give an account of their deeds.

But dreadful as were the stories told by the dead, they were not to be compared with the living agony which writhed and groaned and shrieked around them, some with hands extended either towards them, or with religious instinct towards heaven.

"For God's sake, ladies! a drop of water," and they turned and saw a young boy terribly mutilated by a fragment of a shell which had torn away one side of his face, leaving the white bones and teeth exposed. Sick with horror, Mrs. Mason knelt beside him, and turned away her head that she might not see him drink.

The townspeople now began to join them in great numbers with ambulances, carriages, &c., and one by one the living were removed, while the ladies went from place to place with noble courage, looking out new objects of care.

"What can I do for you?" said Mrs. Randolph, bending over a poor groaning man.

"Ah, Madam! if you could only put something soft under my leg. This ground is killing me; surely no ground ever was so hard before."

There were noble instances of self-forgetfulness too which touched them much.

"Never mind me," said one badly wounded boy, trying to smile, "I can wait very well; but please attend

to these poor fellows around. And, Madam, if you would only ask some one to come here and shoot this horse. I hate to see a dumb animal suffer, and he has been a good horse to me," and the tear, which his own suffering had no power to bring, trembled in his blue eye.

But why dwell upon such horrors? Human nature shrinks and sickens at their narration, and yet for four long years did just such scenes stain and blacken our fair fields, until almost every foot of ground in this smiling valley had been bathed in the life-blood which flowed from the veins of her sons.

Oh! how can Nature view scenes like these with such unmoved serenity, looking tearlessly down with her great burning eye, its beams darting in and dancing fantastically over the dead and dying, and by their brightness making more ghastly the ghastly picture. The sun shines on and the birds try to drown the dismal sounds with a perfect babel of music; but at last day wears itself away, and the sun and the birds leave a solemn stillness upon all things. Merciful night draws the curtain, and then arises the calm still moon like a loving nurse to keep the night-watch over the multitudinous couch, shedding its mild beams like soothing words, or a soft cool hand upon a fevered brow; and the stars wink and blink at each other, trying to wake themselves from this fearful dream of man's passion and depravity.

Mrs. Mason and Mrs. Randolph stayed upon the field until the last living man was removed, which was not accomplished until quite a late hour; and then they walked home through the moonlight, saddened to the heart, and crying out: "How long, O Lord, holy and true?"

CHAPTER XVI.

"'Tis strange, but true; for truth is always strange,
Stranger than fiction."—Byron.

"Well, Captain Murray, what news?" said Mr. Williams, meeting that gentleman in Mr. Randolph's parlor a few days after the taking of Winchester.

"Oh, everything looks badly; at least I would think so, except that General Jackson is in fine spirits. Of course he must have more reliable information than I, but I declare, to me our case looks almost desperate. There is no doubt that Fremont is advancing down the Valley in full force with Milroy and Schenck; and Shields, who two days ago was at Fredericksburg, has turned in this direction with all of his command; he is between Front Royal and Warrenton now, and then there is a large force on the Maryland side opposite Harper's Ferry. Now, how we are to get out I can't see for my life. I can see the object of it all very plainly, and the success, as far as that is concerned. It does relieve and save Richmond, there is no doubt, but Jackson cannot surely intend to allow himself to be captured. I went to him to-day, and although, even knowing him as well as I do, I would not venture to ask him any questions, I put it in the form of giving rather than asking information.

"'General,' I said, 'I suppose there is no doubt of Fremont's advance down the Valley?'

"'Not the least,' he said, 'not the least; he is advancing very rapidly.'

"'And,' said I, 'Shields is coming across to Front Royal?'

"'Yes, to Front Royal, undoubtedly,' and he actually rubbed his hands with delight. 'All right, sir, he is undoubtedly coming across to Front Royal.'

"'And,' continued I, my wonder growing, 'they say there is a large force on the Maryland Heights.'

"'Quite large, quite large; my Stonewall Brigade are watching them.'

"'And, General,' I added, in my bewilderment, 'we are here!'

"'Oh yes, Captain,' he said, actually laughing, 'there is no doubt of that fact at all; we are here.'

"Now, can any wise man or woman tell me what it means?" said Captain Murray.

Everybody laughed, but no one ventured the required information.

"Well, I don't know anything about it," said Mr. Williams, "but I know Old Jack does; and I would a great deal rather he would think for me in these matters than to do it for myself."

"Oh yes, I have perfect confidence in him; but for my life I cannot get out of my habit of wondering," said Captain Murray.

"Well, I am only afraid it will end in our being left again," said Ellen Randolph, dejectedly; "and I feel as if I could not stand that."

"That is the least evil to be apprehended," said Mrs. Randolph; "I would be thankful if they get out safe, without a fight."

"There is one thing to be glad of in it all, at any rate," said Captain Murray; "we have captured enough stores here to pay all the expenses of the expedition,

and more. How do your patients come on, Mrs. Mason?" turning as he spoke to Mrs. Mason.

"Young Gateman is doing very well," she said, "his is only a flesh wound; but Carter not so well, he has fever, which makes me uneasy about him."

"And the Yankee?"

"Oh, poor fellow, he is very ill; his delirium has been more violent ever since our men came in. I do not believe he will ever be well."

"This is a curious state of things," said Mr. Williams; "two Confederates and a Yankee in the same house, with the same nurses. What ever induced you to undertake the care of the Yankee?"

"It speaks well for their patriotism, does it not?" said Mr. Murray, laughing. "We see how they do; as soon as our backs are turned they go over to the enemy, and even open a hospital for his sick!"

Ellen did not join in the laugh which followed. She looked seriously teased, while Mrs. Mason answered:

"Well, for the matter of that I should nurse the Federal just as I would my own men; there is but little difference to me when they are suffering. But this poor young fellow interests me deeply. You know General Shields took our house here for his headquarters for about a week during his stay here but—well, he did not like it altogether, and much to our relief he went away; but this young man was sick at the time, and he was left here with his nurse, who after a few days ran off with all of his money and valuables. Since then the duty of nursing him has devolved upon us, and I have actually become very much interested in him; but I fear our care will not be rewarded by his recovery."

"Well, I know you will have your reward," said Mr. Williams; "but I don't think I could do it."

As it is not our purpose to stay our footsteps over this portion of our story, but to pass on to other scenes, we will simply glance at the movements of the Confederates, which seem to be involved in such mystery.

Of all the eventful and wonderful history of General Jackson, there is probably no episode which is so thrilling as this expedition up and down the Valley of Virginia. To touch it with fiction seems to be sacrilege, the truth being too replete with interest to require any addition.

He remained in Winchester just one week, watching with unflinching eye the gathering forces around him; even keeping the Stonewall Brigade at Harper's Ferry in order to deceive the enemy at that point with the idea that he was falling into the trap laid for him. General Ashby in the meantime proved a valuable auxiliary; always in the saddle, he, with his most carefully picked men, reconnoitered the whole country in every direction, and not a movement was made by the gathering forces which was not reported at once to the commanding General. At last the moment for action arrived. The brigade at Harper's Ferry were ordered to move towards Winchester with the greatest expedition and secrecy. The sentinels were left at their posts, so that the watching enemy across the river might not suspect their departure; and so admirable was the success of this move that it had been made twenty-four hours before it was discovered. Again did the Winchester people witness their own desertion by their friends with heavy hearts, to which was added the more than ordinary anxiety for the

safety of the army. Battalion after battalion marched through the town, exchanging farewells as they passed through the streets. The Stonewall Brigade brought up the rear at double-quick, in spite of their long march from Harper's Ferry. Night had already fallen when they left.

Nothing could exceed the dead quiet which reigned when the inhabitants looked out upon the deserted streets the next morning, a quiet rendered more striking from the busy enjoyment of the past week, when every one had given himself up to the happiness of the hour.

During the whole day the only sound which broke upon the ear was the distant firing on the Valley road, confirming their fears that this exit had not been unattended with danger.

The two armies of Shields and Fremont, the one approaching from the east and the other from the west, were not more than half a day's journey apart, Shields being at Front Royal and Fremont a short distance to the west of Strausburg. General Jackson so timed his retreat as to slip in between the two, leaving them to follow him in a mad chase instead of forming a junction. Shields at once dashed down the Massanuttan Valley, rightly conjecturing that Jackson would cross the Shenandoah river at Port Republic bridge — it being indeed the only point which afforded him an exit from his present perilous situation — while Fremont followed up the Shenandoah Valley, about half a day behind Jackson.

The escaping army reached Harrisonburg in the morning, and the pursuing in the afternoon. Diverging from the Shenandoah Valley at Harrisonburg,

Jackson moved across to Port Republic. But instead of making the best of his way out of the danger, he deliberately stopped; and when Fremont came up with him at Cross Keys, about five miles from Port Republic, he found him waiting for him, and here a bloody battle was fought, resulting in a victory for the Confederates, but in which battle fell the Valley hero, General Turner Ashby, the greatest loss General Jackson could probably have sustained. Night closed upon the fighting troops, and Fremont confidently expecting the battle to be renewed in the morning, allowed his tired men to rest on their arms. Not so with General Jackson. As soon as the darkness was sufficiently dense to conceal his movements he was up and away, and the first news which General Fremont had of his absence was the sound of his guns at Port Republic. Let him hurry as he would now he only arrived in time to witness the defeat of Shields, and too late to afford him any assistance, as the Confederate army was already out of reach, and could be seen winding up the Valley on the opposite side of the river, lighted by the flames of the burning bridge, the destruction of which effectually prevented pursuit.

CHAPTER XVII.

"The end must justify the means."—PRIOR.

BEFORE we see Rose Hill again it has tasted a new experience of the war; for after the departure of Jackson from the Valley left the whole country unprotected, foraging parties spread themselves over the entire country, and the citizens were subjected to terrible annoyances, even exceeding those experienced in the towns, as there was of course a necessary discipline amongst the troops at a post which could not be extended to these bands of cavalry, sent out for the purpose of collecting provisions, and accomplishing their object with a thoroughness which often left the helpless women and children perfectly destitute.

As was to be expected, a country-place so well-known as Rose Hill did not long escape the notice of these parties, and whatever the Confederate army had left, which was not more than was considered an ample allowance for the comfort of the family, was driven off by the Yankees; and it was with mingled feelings of indignation, sorrow, and perplexity, that these unprotected ladies saw their entire live stock driven off, with the exception of one cow and a broken-down cart-horse, which with many laudatory comments upon their own generosity the officers allowed them to keep for the comfort and convenience of about fifty human beings.

It was during this time of perplexity and trouble that Margaret Murray, walking into her sister's room one day, said:

"Mary, I am sorry to tell you, but Mr. Dallam is down stairs and wants to see you."

Mary started from her seat. "Oh, Margie, what shall I do?"

"Don't see him. Let me go down and dismiss him."

For an instant the timid girl seemed inclined to listen to this advice, but only for an instant.

"No," she said, "he never would believe that of my own free will I decided in the matter. I think I had better go." But the hands which proceeded to arrange her toilet for the interview trembled so as to be almost helpless.

Margaret stood by, affording her such help as she could.

"Now, Mary," said she, "don't let him persuade you; you are so yielding."

"I don't think you need be afraid," was Mary's quiet answer. "I would not marry him now if there was not another man in the world."

There was something in the decision of her reply which surprised Margaret. She forgot that some characters, like physical constitutions, only develop their bone and sinew under rough usage.

Mary Holcombe's character was like a glass of sparkling Catawba, which when first it catches the exhilarating air, bubbles and laughs with effervescing enjoyment in its brief existence, challenging the admiration of all, but the very element which excites exhausts, and that quickly, for in a moment it seems to die sadly away. I say seems; for looking down into the golden permanent liquid formed from this glad foam, we see rising from its depths, permeating its whole being and forming its life, sparkles of light, which, if less upon

the surface, are not less beautiful, if less conspicuous are more all-pervading.

Mr. Dallam awaited in some anxiety the appearance of his *fiancée*. He was perfectly aware that, reason as he would with himself, he had committed an act which would subject him to the censure of many, and that in the South he would have few apologists; but such was his confidence in the affection of this young girl, that even should she adopt the opinion of others upon the step he had taken, he would have but small difficulty in reinstating himself in her opinion and her heart. The fact is that while he fully appreciated the charm of Mary's character, he underrated it. Of its hidden depth and strength he had no conception; and though he looked forward to some reproaches perhaps (though even this was doubtful), he had no fears for the result.

Never had he felt so exultant as when he first caught sight of Mary. He had risen at the sound of her light footfall, and started eagerly forward as she made her appearance. She was dressed in a simple white muslin, without ornament or color, if we except the knot of blue ribbon at her throat. Excitement had given her face a glow and her eyes a light which made her exceedingly beautiful.

What power there is in a mere gesture! Those delicate hands extended towards him after his long absence would have been welcome, happiness! but raised as they were before her, they formed a defence, a barrier which even arrested his steps before he had measured half the distance across the room. There she stood in all the might of her maiden weakness, and he could more easily with his unaided arm have stormed a battery than have attempted her simple defences.

Nor was she on her part unmoved at the sight of him. The dead and buried love, like the bones at the touch of the Apostle's carcass, rose and stood upright. There was so much that was tangible and real in her feeling for him. There was the manly beauty which had formed a part of it; the light gleaming from his eye which it had been her happiness to bring there, the voice which still vibrated like a familiar note of music upon her ear. But the soul was gone; that which had given life and brightness to all this fair surface had departed with her confidence in his honor "like a tale that is told."

"Mary! Mary!" he said reproachfully, and almost smiled to see how at the sound of his voice her hands dropped to her side, and the blood surged backwards and forwards over the speaking face, one instant bathing it with the rose and the next leaving it with the lily.

His confidence all returned with this evidence of his power. He made one step forward, with his arms extended towards her; and again raising her hands as a defence, she passed him and seated herself on the opposite side of the room.

He almost felt like being angry at her childish waywardness, except that it became her; do what she would, it added to her attractions in his eyes. He would try, however, what meeting her on her own ground would do; so seating himself at a little distance, he calmly awaited her first words, which he saw she was striving to utter. They surprised him so much that he smiled openly.

"I am glad you are come at last."

"One would not imagine so from your reception of me," he said with warmth.

"Yes, I have been expecting you day after day, ever since the Federal army came."

He moved his chair a little nearer to her. Without looking towards him, she went on:

"I knew that it was best for us both that this should be done with forever. If I had known your address I would have written. But it is better as it is. I might have felt some uncertainty about myself if I had not seen you; now I know."

"Know what?" he said, a little surprised at her manner.

"Know that the past is past," said she, turning to him.

"Pshaw! little girl," he said, with the caressing manner he knew she used to love; "this is all nonsense, a mere thin cloud over the sun of our love. Now it has passed. Come, don't look so serious; it is unlike yourself."

"Mr. Dallam, you mistake," said Mary Holcombe as he attempted to take her hand, and at once the dignity of the woman rose in her; "this is no mere freak to be passed over and forgotten. You have done that which changes our relations so entirely that the lightest familiarity is an insult to me."

"Forgive me," he said, astonished and almost awed by the change in her, and drawing back from her side; "but explain."

"Explain!" she said, bending her flashing eyes upon him. "Is it possible that you need an explanation? What madness possessed you to think that I could ever link myself with dishonor?"

"Dishonor!" he said, but not angrily, "no, nor anything like it. It was no more dishonor than it would have been to have resigned here."

"Would the Confederate Government regard it in the same light?" said she.

"I don't suppose it would," said he, after a moment's hesitation; "but I speak not of how others regard it, but of my own opinion. I could not leave my father again under the circumstances; and my mother is a confirmed invalid, and urged my compliance." He spoke with difficulty and moodily. "I might urge other considerations which had weight with me; but —"

"Don't urge them," she said excitedly. "Don't make me fall in my own esteem so utterly as to know that the thought of me acted as a temptation to a man to perjure himself. It is enough to know that I was misunderstood so entirely as to lead you to suppose that I could give my sanction to so fearful a mistake."

"This is all exaggerated sentiment, a mere idea," he said.

"Is it?" she said, more calmly; "I think not. It seems clear to me that swearing allegiance to one Government, while still unabsolved from that, you swore allegiance to another."

"You have been well tutored," he said, smiling bitterly at her reasoning.

"Again you mistake me," she said. "I studied the matter out myself, turning it backward and forward to find some favorable light for you. But the end of the whole was this: You sold your birthright for a mess of pottage."

"Perhaps," he said, wincing under her words and taking refuge from her unanswerable arguments in innendoes, "perhaps there were other reasons which made this decision on your part easy. Constancy is not an

infallible attribute of your sex; or perhaps — indeed I think, from the facility with which you throw off your engagement to me, you never really cared for me."

For one instant her face flushed indignantly and then paled away, and she seemed to spend one moment in thought ere she answered.

"I almost think you are right. No, I never loved *you*. The man I loved wore your form, but it was not you. It was an ideal which I set up in my heart and made an idol of. (God forgive the sin!) It fell; and falling, was shattered."

She seemed to have ceased speaking to him, and to be rather thinking aloud. He recalled Ellen Randolph's words, and acknowledged with bitterness that she had judged rightly. His eyes turned towards the young girl, and when he saw in her all he had once hoped for — and the memory of all her child-like loveliness rose up before him — the hot tears filled his eyes. Pride of manhood kept them there, but could not banish the tremulousness from his voice as he said:

"Mary, I have mistaken you, truly; but if I obtain forgiveness of the Confederate Government, will you too pardon?"

A woman may forgive a fault in a man if bravely borne, but never a humiliation.

It was with an expression as near akin to contempt as Mary Holcombe's face was capable of that she said:

"Were you to come to me covered with the honors of the world, the recollection of this moment would rise up against you."

Then he knew that it was useless any longer to plead, and that with all her wealth of youth, beauty, and sweetness, she was lost to him.

After it was all over, and he was gone, Mary Holcombe — her new-born and already dead sternness all love — went to her own room, and throwing herself on the bed, wept bitter tears over her dead and buried love; then sprinkling on the grave some sweet flowers of memory, she left it forever.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"The better part of valor is discretion."—SHAKSPEARE.

ALTHOUGH our glances backward at the sad story of the war are too often through blinding tears, yet was it not all sorrow; for there are incidents connected with it calling forth the keenest interest and amusement, from the rapid development of character and resources which they display — resources called into action by the emergencies of the times, which obliged prompt, decisive, energetic thought, resulting in prompt, decisive, and energetic action. Elements of character which would have remained slumbering during times of peace, seemed to have their birth and grow into vigorous life as in a moment. Men who in ordinary times would have played at the little game of their lives without even the breath of fame touching them, placed themselves high upon its rolls by deeds of daring which electrified the world; and *woman*, naturally shrinking from the mere rumor of danger, now entered the arena where death might any moment be her fate, and dared it for the sake of others as calmly as the hero on the battle-field. Danger and death were the grim inmates of every household, and the women grew so accustomed to their companionship that they ceased to shrink away from them, but laughed and talked in their presence as if they had been legitimate members of the home circle.

During the spring and summer of the year 1863, Rose Hill constituted in some sort a centre around

which the most stirring portion of the campaign revolved, subjecting its inmates to those violent changes which, though peculiarly trying, are also so exciting as to be productive of some pleasurable experiences; for although their hearts were continually kept in a state of anxiety about the safety of their friends, although there was never a day which did not bring to their ears the sound of the murderous cannon, yet it afforded also frequent opportunities of seeing their friends; and these little oases in the desert of danger were welcomed with the keenest pleasure. One feels infinitely more in such times than in days of peace and prosperity, when both sorrow and joy are tame experiences as compared with the same sentiments in times of war, when sorrow comes with a wail deep, dreadful, despairing, and joy with exulting shouts of triumph. Often the two armies would sweep over them several times in one day. The ears catching approaching shouts, they would only have time to rush out to the door, and pursued and pursuers would rush onward with the rapidity of the wind; and too often a chance shot would bring suffering and death over their thresholds, first of one side and then of the other.

It was a warm day in early summer. The three ladies of Rose Hill had sought the library as the coolest spot about the house, and were sitting with closed Venetians, through which a pleasant breeze found its way. Mrs. Holcombe and Margaret Murray were at work, while Mary lounged on a sofa with a book in her hand. Her attention, however, was divided between her interest in it and in a game of romps which was progressing between the two little boys, Eddy Holcombe and Robert Murray.

The former was ingeniously harnessed into traces which were held by the baby hands of little Robert, whose uncertain footsteps were not proof against the curvetting and prancing of his spirited steed, so that every few moments his rotund little figure would roll ignominiously on the floor; upon which frequent occasions Mary, quite deserting her book, rushed to the rescue, reinstating him upon his chubby legs, and joining in the bubbling joyous laughter of childhood with gleeful merriment.

The door leading into the hall was open, and the wide space afforded a convenient highway for the horse and rider, the music of their voices making echoes in the almost empty house.

"A dozen times at least that I have set you up in life," said Mary, running down the hall and catching up the laughing boy who rolled helplessly on the floor; "I might as well give up all thought of reading."

She was standing just opposite the front entrance of the house, and her sentence was interrupted by the sudden appearance on its threshold of her old friend, Mr. Hautman, panting from exhaustion, and with a face in which excitement, fun and anxiety all mingled.

"Hite me! hite me, my dear Miss Holcome!" he said hurriedly; "de Yankees is at my heel. Gif me sum citzen clothes; I manish de rest."

The sound of his voice had summoned the other two ladies to the spot, and Mrs. Holcombe, quite stirred out of her usual quietness, said, starting towards her room:

"This way! this way! I have a suit of John's hanging in the sun which will just about fit you."

Even while she spoke they disappeared together, and

In a moment the suit of Confederate gray was thrown out of the door, and Mary ran off with them to some remote hiding-place, while Margie took the precaution to lock the front door and reconnoitre from the half-closed window. In as short a time as I have taken to tell the story, the different actors in it returned to the hall, the young German completely metamorphosed by a suit of black broadcloth, and flourishing in his hands an instrument used to unscrew bedsteads which his quick eye had caught sight of in Mrs. Holcombe's room.

"I tune your piano," he said, proceeding to remove the lid of the instrument which stood in the library. "You ladies go in an' sew; I will do de talk."

There was no time to lose, as his pursuers were already loudly knocking at the door, which Margaret Murray opened.

It was impossible for the officer who stepped into the hall to avoid being shaken in his confidence by the perfect serenity of the scene before him. Mrs. Murray had evidently just risen from her work, as she had a half-darned stocking stretched on her hand, while her little boy clung to her dress. Mrs. Holcombe sat with her work-basket beside her, and little Eddy on a stool at her feet with a book open on his knee, while Mary lounged in an easy-chair, watching the motions of the business-looking foreigner who kept up a ceaseless "tum! tum! tum!" on the piano.

The tableau remained only long enough for him to take in the view and be influenced by it, for the moment his appearance was recognised the ladies started to their feet in well-feigned surprise, the piano-tuner ceased his work, and all stood as if waiting an explanation of the intrusion.

The officer, a soldierly looking man, bowed courteously to the ladies, as he said:

"Excuse my intrusion, ladies, but a Confederate soldier took refuge in this house a moment ago, and I come to claim my prisoner."

"A Confederate soldier!" exclaimed several voices at once.

"Yes, ladies; he ran up those steps a moment ago," pointing to the flight which led up the terraces, "and disappeared in this spot. He must be concealed in this house."

Margaret Murray was about to speak, but was forestalled by the piano-tuner, who stepped forward, badge of office in hand, and speaking with admirable self-possession, said:

"Dere is bin no one here sense I cum, sir. When you see him?"

The officer repeated his former information.

"He mus' be in de house den," said the German, with the grave manner of one drawing an important inference from undeniable premises. "Better git him ef you kin. I no see no Rebel sense I cum."

"Oh, he is here, I am confident," said the man; "but he may have concealed himself either in the shrubbery or the lower part of the house without your seeing him. With the permission of the ladies I will institute a search."

The permission was willingly accorded, and while one party searched the shrubbery and kept guard around the house, another, with the Captain at its head, proceeded to search the house.

Mr. Hautman accompanied this latter party, and the Captain found him not only a valuable assistant, but

an agreeable companion. Various suspicious nooks which might have been passed by he pointed out for investigation, and enlivened the way with numerous stories of his life as connected with the prosecution of his business, and also of what he had heard of the cunning and achievements of the "Rebel soldiers," none of which seemed to be exceeded by the present instance, as the most diligent search failed to elicit anything to reward the labor.

"You sure you see him cum here?" asked Mr. Hautman as they returned to the hall.

"As sure as that I see you," said the man. "He was a man not so tall as you are, dressed in artillery uniform."

"Hum! dat's vary queer. But I never see sich men as dese Rebels; dey sometimes look like dey sink down in de groun'."

"Well," said the Captain regretfully," I don't see anything to do but to give up, hoping for better luck next time. And," turning to his companion, "although I feel no suspicion of you myself, sir, I must request you, as you are the only gentleman present, to accompany me to headquarters, that the officer in command may be as well satisfied as I am."

"Certain, sir, certain; vary reasonable. I go wid pleasure. Ladies, I leaf my instrument here till I cum back; den I finish de tune your piano." And off he went, much to the amusement of the ladies, and equally to his own as he managed to give them a sly glance of meaning as he rode off on a horse furnished by his new friend. It was several hours before he returned, having undergone a slight examination perfectly satisfactory to all parties, as he had sustained his character to perfection and had not even excited a suspicion as to his identity.

CHAPTER XIX.

"The best laid schemes of men and mice
Gang aft agley."—BURNS.

"MAMMA, do you know that I almost think we are the victims of some particular spite or ill-feeling on the part of these Yankees? There seems to be a system in their annoyances; they never let us alone two days at a time."

Margaret Murray was the speaker, as Mrs. Holcombe and herself stood together on the front portico, taking in, with their extended vision, the utter desolation which the whole scene presented—the fields lying fallow, the only crops they seemed to bear being the white mushroom tents which dotted them in the distance. The sole signs of life which met their eyes, if anything so wanting in animation could be called life, was an occasional lounging figure of a negro enjoying his freedom by doing nothing.

"Oh, no I expect every one suffers in the same way," said Mrs. Holcombe, in answer to Margaret's suggestion. "They are determined to starve us out, and at this rate it will not take long to do it."

"Do you know," said Margaret, laughing, "that they say Sarah is taking boarders over at 'Glen Burnie'? She is making quite a fortune."

"Oh, yes. I shall be relieved when they are all gone now. They are a dead expense and no profit," said Mrs. Holcombe.

"Ungrateful creatures!" said Margaret indignantly.

"I think there are a great many excuses to be made for them. Of course they love the thought of freedom, and they believe that this Northern army has come down here solely on their account, and that the South is fighting to retain them in bondage; necessarily it has its effect."

"But they know we never did deceive them," said Margaret.

"That don't make any difference. Their minds are warped now. They don't think of the past, except its hardships, for which they make their masters responsible."

"I think Mammy is very much disgusted," said Margaret.

"Oh, yes. Mammy is above most of the others, she has been so much with white people; but does it not strike you that old Ailsie has undergone a change?" said Mrs. Holcombe.

"Yes, indeed; she is evidently preparing for something. She looks as smiling as possible, and I have not heard of her 'pains' for a long time."

"Well," added Mrs. Murray, laughing, "I only wish she would go. They would certainly get a treasure. She has not done a stroke of work for ten years past."

"Where are you going, little man?" called Jean, as Eddie made his appearance riding around the house on his "stick horse."

"I'm doin' to dit my dun. I see a Yantee tomin'," said the child, as his white curls disappeared around the next corner.

"I am sorry to hear that news," said Mrs. Holcombe.

It was confirmed on the instant by the appearance

of a long-legged, raw-boned cavalryman in the blue uniform, who presented himself and handed a note to Mrs. Holcombe.

"Good gracious!" said Margie, looking over her shoulder, "an order for the contents of our meat-house! Well, this is truly the rose-leaf which overflows the cup!"

"What are we expected to live on?" said Mrs. Holcombe in dismay, turning to the man.

"Waal, I don't know now. I 'spect you has a plenty left yet, and womenkind don't require sich strong food as we men folk; and then too, ma'am, you hadn't orter forgit that we has to fight, and we sorter can't do that without plenty o' meat."

"And do you suppose," said Margaret angrily, "that we are going to supply you with strength to fight our own men?"

"Not ef you kin help it, ma'am, I know; but you sorter can't. We's got the strength on you. Now, ef you was jist loyal citizens I 'spose as how you could keep your meat, but bein' Rebels, the Government don't seem to keer whether you eats or not."

"This is sheer impertinence," said Margaret indignantly, adding, with her proud head thrown back and her voice ringing out its tones of command: "Where is this Captain Brown who signs this paper?"

"Down at the 'campment, ma'am, I 'spect," said the man, turning in surprise at the change a minute had wrought, and taking off his hat, which he had not done before.

"Well, go to him and tell him that I want to see him. He certainly is not a brute; and not one piece of this meat shall go until he comes himself for it. We are not obliged to obey orders sent in this way."

"But, ma'am, my orders is —"

"Never mind what your orders are; do as I tell you," said Margaret, leaning over the railing against which she stood and speaking emphatically.

There is a strange power in a beautiful woman sometimes, and this fact had a striking illustration in the scene before us. But a moment ago and the manner of this man had been impertinent in the extreme; but the change of mood in Margaret Murray had produced a change also in him. Perhaps if he had thought for an instant of her perfect powerlessness to prevent the execution of his order, it might have weakened the influence of her appearance; but there she stood above him, with her queenly height, her noble bearing, her flashing eyes, and glowing cheeks, morally, mentally, and really the superior, her claim asserting and maintaining itself unaided by physical strength; and if he had been shot for it the next instant the man could have done no less than obey.

"Now, Mamma," said Margaret hastily, as soon as he was out of hearing, "there is not a moment to be lost; they will be here again directly. Mammy and Uncle Bob are the only two of the negroes whom I will trust. You go and keep the servants engaged in the kitchen, and I will put Mary on guard about the quarters, while Mammy and Uncle Bob and myself do the rest."

In an incredibly short space of time her arrangements were completed, and the two faithful old servants at work. Margaret was everywhere, in full and vigorous command of her forces, now reconnoitering in different directions to see that no curious eyes were prying into her proceedings, now running into the

kitchen to see that Mrs. Holcombe was sufficiently vigilant, and then down to give Mary fresh charges on no account to let any of the people come towards the house, and then making a dash into the smoke-house to receive reports of the progress there. She found everything getting on admirably. Mrs. Holcombe, as the best way of meeting the emergency, was superintending a monster cake-baking, and never before during the existence of Rose Hill had a cake-baking been superintended so closely by its mistress, or required so many hands in its manufacture. Dolly must watch the oven and grease the pans, Sally was required to beat the whites until they could not only have stood alone, but borne a considerable burden besides, Hannah beat the yolks, and Susan creamed the butter. Never before had their gentle mistress been so exacting or hard to please, and all too in a quiet, composed way which excited no suspicion.

Mary, in the meantime, took a book, and seating herself so as to command the only path leading from the quarters to the house, stopped every one who came by, and either engaged them in conversation or sent them off in messages in different directions.

"Ah, George," she said, as a stout negro man came up the path, "I certainly am glad to see you. I have been sitting here in the sun until I am almost choked with thirst."

"Yes, ma'am," said George, raising his hat. "I will go to de house en git you sum nice ice-water."

"I don't want ice-water; I am not very fond of ice-water any time. I want some from the spring over the hill, behind the quarters."

George looked astonished. Why that particular

spring should be fixed upon, when there were three or four nearer, was somewhat mysterious; but after hesitating for an instant and showing his white teeth, off he ran.

"Ah, Aunt Ailsie, where are you going?"

"Up to de house, thank the Lord, Misstis."

"Well, how are you, old woman?"

"Oh, thank you, Misstis, I is heap better. I seems sorter to be gittin' limber en gallish agin."

"Indeed, Aunt Ailsie!" said Mary, laughing openly, "that is a wonderful change. You must be thinking of going with the Yankees."

"No indeed, Misstis, I ain't no sich fool. I is goin' to stay 'long of you ma, and let her take keer of me all my life."

"Very kind and considerate of you, Aunt Ailsie," said Mary, her face beaming with fun. "Now you are getting so young I will have to take you as my maid when Hannah goes to the Yankees."

"Law, Miss May, but I used to was your Gramma's maid, when I was a gal. But, Miss May, I want you to give me one new coat, ef you please, ma'am."

"A new coat?" said Mary, laughing.

"Yes, ma'am, ef you please, ma'am, en one string like dat you got dare," pointing to the ribbon-bow at her collar.

"What upon earth, Aunt Ailsie," said Mary, her curiosity gaining the mastery over her amusement, "would you do with a ribbon?"

"War it, Misstis, war it! You see — he! he! he!" looking shyly down and smoothing her cotton dress as a cover to her embarrassment — "Jake from over to Mr. Clarke's en me is goin' to git maryed."

"What!" exclaimed Mary, dropping her book in her astonishment: "married! Good gracious!" and looking at the old withered face aping youth with her attempts at modest shyness, she laughed until the tears ran over her cheeks.

"Well, Miss May," said Ailsie, a little mortified at the reception of her news, "he want me."

"But, Aunt Ailsie," said Mary, trying to control her amusement, "you are too old to be married."

"Oh no, ma'am," said the old woman, shaking her head: "womans always likes to git mar-yed, do dey is old. You see Jake," growing suddenly confidential, "he want somewhar to stay; his old marster is gone way, en all his young marsters is in de army, en he ain't got nobody to men' his close. But law, Miss May! look up at de house; de sartinly is soljers dare."

Yes, there they were, and Mary was relieved from duty.

Margie in the meantime had been superintending the removal of the meat, which Uncle Bob insisted ought not be secreted in the house, as it would certainly be found there.

"Well, where are you going to put it, Uncle Bob?" said Margaret.

"Never you mind, my young misstis. Ef dey ax you, you say you dunno; dey never will find dese hogs whar I puts em," and off he walked with the big clothes-basket full on his shoulder.

"Well! well!" said Mammy, putting her arms akimbo and nodding her head slowly and contemplatively; "de devil surely is got de upper han' in dese days, de 'leniel mus' be comin'. 'Tis surtintly time he

was gittin bound, fur he is goin' abroad like a roarin' lion, in dese blue coats, seekin' what he kin devour." And Mammy's glance at the devoted bacon made a practical illustration of her quotation.

"I wish he would let our bacon alone," said Margaret laughing, and at the same time gazing anxiously down the road by which the foragers might every moment be expected. They were longer coming than she had anticipated. Uncle Bob had returned with his empty basket, and was up on the ladder throwing down hams and shoulders, which Mammy fixed in the basket, and Margaret resumed her watch.

Scarcely a minute had elapsed, however, before she returned with flying footsteps to say that about a dozen men were issuing from the grove, and it required all Uncle Bob's expedition to make off with his last load before their arrival.

Taking the key of the smoke-house from Mammy, Margaret Murray ran up to her own room, to smooth her hair, and to remove from her person all traces of disorder before she should be summoned to answer for her rebellion.

"Ah, baby!" she said as she entered her room, and a little figure all quivering and screaming with delight at her appearance ran to meet her, "his mamma has not one minute for him." But snatching him up and burying her face for an instant in his deliciously cool, soft, sweet flesh, she bathed him in her kisses, showering them upon his glowing cheeks and laughing lips, feeling with rapture the print of his pearly little teeth against her lip, and then placing him, all glowing, in the lap of his nurse. Master Robby had no idea, however, of resigning his rights without a struggle, and nurse did

not satisfy when mamma was present; so his little feet beat a vigorous tattoo against nurse's knees, keeping time to the music of his voice, which gave forth a perfect babel of music, attesting the strength and power of his lungs.

"There, take him down stairs," said Margaret, hastily putting a little straw hat on his head; "I can't bear to hear him cry."

This disposed of, it was the work of a minute to dip her flushed face in a basin of cool water, dashing the limpid drops backwards and forwards, and emerging from the operation looking like a queen-rose with the morning dew on it. A few hasty manipulations with the brush over the shining hair, a sleight-of-hand movement with the knot of ribbon at her throat, and rapid straightening of draperies, and there she stood complete, calmly, radiantly beautiful.

"Oh, Margie!" said Mary, rushing into the room with frightened face, "the soldiers are all around the house, and the officer in the parlor wanting to speak to you!"

"Well, I am ready for him," said Margaret, smiling composedly. "There is nothing to frighten you, child; I sent for him to speak to me."

"And, Margie, as I came through the back way I heard him stop Nanny in the hall with Robby and ask her whose child it was."

"I hope she told him, for I am very proud of that piece of property, of which *he* can't deprive me."

"Oh, Margie," said Mary, looking at her sister with surprise not unmixed with admiration, "I do not see how you *can* be so cool about it! I know I should be frightened to death."

Margaret already had her hand on the door. Turning around with a glowing face and a shyness of manner which always characterised her when she departed from her usual reticence with regard to the innermost feelings of her heart, she said:

"Mary, do you know what has helped me all day? The last day my husband was with me, when we were taking leave of each other, and I was crying so bitterly at the thought of how long it would be before I saw him again, he whispered in my ear, 'As thy day, so shall thy strength be.' It is such a comfort, too, to know that he is putting me in the safe keeping of 'Our Father' each day. I don't seem to be afraid of anything." And as she said the last word she opened the door, and before her sister had time to speak she was gone.

One moment she stopped to kiss baby as she passed through the hall, and then without further hesitation pursued her course to the drawing-room.

The room was dark, and as she opened the door, coming out of the light she saw but dimly a dark figure rise up from the opposite side of the room to meet her. On the contrary, as she hesitated for an instant in the open door, her form was set in a framework of light, and stood out against the vision of the man who looked out of the darkness upon her.

"I address Mrs. Murray?"

She bowed her head, while a thrill went through her at the familiar tones of the voice.

"Mrs. Murray does not recognise an old friend."

"It would be hard to do so when he comes disguised as an enemy, and with robbery in his right hand," said she, peering through the darkness, and trying in vain

to bring her memory to help her in the task of recognition.

"*She* is at least unchanged, except in name," said the officer, making a step forward as he spoke. A ray of light met him, and brought to her view with startling distinctness the familiar face of Dr. Burton.

For one instant her courage failed her. With the suddenness of a blow, all of the unhappiness, to her, of which he had been the author started out from her memory — the disgrace he had projected, and the shot which had so nearly robbed her life of its life. She knew him as her bitter, remorseless enemy.

Watching her keenly to see the effect of this recognition, a gleam of joy darted to his heart as he saw her arms thrown up above her head, a natural action for a woman in mortal terror. He had brought down the noble animal with one shot. The next instant, however, he almost doubted if the gesture had not been a creation of his imagination, as she stood before him calm and self-possessed, though a trifle pale perhaps, and her voice had its old ring of clear music, without a tremor in it.

"It is Dr. Burton, then, to whom our thanks are due for the losses and annoyances of the past few days?"

"Dr. Burton simply obeys orders, madam. He is under orders to forage through the country, and he is doing it," was the answer, with a little embarrassment and a good deal of defiance.

"Thoroughly, as we can testify," said she, with a bitter smile. "If he is as faithful everywhere as at Rose Hill, the United States has reason to congratulate itself upon its forage-master."

He struggled against it, but for the life of him he

could not help wincing under her blows. He felt the nerves of his face twitch, to hide which evidence against himself he rubbed it violently with his pocket handkerchief, as though overcome by the heat.

Without answering her directly, he said:

"You sent for me, I believe."

"No, I sent for the Captain Brown who signed that order."

A smile, half of embarrassment, crossed his face.

"Well, I suppose I will do as well."

A light broke over her.

"Are you Captain Brown?" she asked.

He attempted a laugh, but failed; tried to cover the failure with a cough, then looking up and finding her still waiting his answer, said doggedly:

"Well, there's nothing against that, is there? A man has a right to name himself what he pleases."

"Perhaps so," she said, "but it is generally esteemed rather a suspicious circumstance when a man assumes an alias."

Either he was becoming conscious that he was making rather a sorry appearance in this word contest, and determined to throw off the spell, or, conscious of his power, he was anxious to make an exhibition of it, and hasten the humiliation of this indomitable spirit, whose cool self-composure fairly maddened him.

"Now listen to me, young woman," he said, coming towards her, "this talk won't do for me. Our relations are changed somewhat since I saw you last. I let you lord it then, because — because I chose to. But that time is past, and I advise you to keep that sharp tongue of yours still, or it will be worse for you."

Even while it galled him and made him feel beaten

and baffled, his human heart paid in some sort an involuntary tribute of admiration to the fearless front with which she met his threats. Standing there with her proud head thrown back, and her cheek unblanched by a symptom of fear, her lip curled slightly as she said:

"So Dr. Burton, or Captain Brown, whichever it may be, is not ashamed to war upon women and children."

"No, not when women and children war upon me."

"The weapons of our warfare," she said, smiling, "must be formidable indeed to require so great an expenditure of force to overcome them," and going to a window, she threw open the blinds, and disclosed to view some twelve or fifteen men drawn up in front of them.

"Yes," said he, following her, and returning the military salute with which the men acknowledged his presence, "you see that the Federal Government is prepared to enforce the execution of its orders. If you had submitted quietly this morning there would have been no necessity for this display."

At this juncture Mrs. Holcombe appeared at the door.

"Mamma," said Margaret, "you remember I said to you this morning that I was sure the attentions we have been experiencing for some time past must owe their frequency to some special friend. Our quondam acquaintance, Dr. Burton," pointing towards him, "now transformed into Captain Brown."

Mrs. Holcombe looked bewildered, and but half understood the scene. Recognising Dr. Burton, however, her face blanched at the recollection of the last time she had seen him, mingled with a sense of his present power. Now, Jean Holcombe was no heroine, and

had no courage except moral courage. Physically she was — there is no doubt of the fact — a coward. Clasping her hands she said:

"Surely Dr. Burton will not allow a private feeling to influence his public actions?"

She was too easily brought down for him to value his conquest, and he looked beyond her at the higher game as he said:

"I shall certainly, madam, obey orders strictly, and those orders require me to forage thoroughly through this country. The Rebels have had their full share, and the United States Government has a right to the rest."

"And does the Government give no equivalent for these things?" asked Mrs. Holcombe.

"Oh, yes, ma'am," said Dr. Burton, with a wicked sneer, "I will give you a paper securing you full payment at the end of the war — provided you can prove satisfactorily that you have been loyal citizens during the whole of it."

Even Mrs. Holcombe smiled, and Margaret laughed outright.

"I judge rightly that it would be useless to give any such guarantee to you," said the man.

"Perfectly," said Mrs. Holcombe, adding, "The Southern people then have no rights of property?"

"No; everything they have is confiscated for the use of the United States."

"And women and children are left to starvation, said Margaret.

He turned toward her, and if ever his Satanic Majesty looked forth from human eye, she saw him then. She thought of the man who had the legion of devils,

and believed she saw him. He had utterly failed in humbling her; but still he had the power to revenge himself, and would do it. It was hard work to preserve his composure of manner, with the fiery wrath burning within him; but he must do it. So bowing himself out, the two ladies heard him issuing his orders for the complete sacking of the meat-house; and had it not been for the piece of strategy accomplished in the morning, the large household would have been left without the necessaries of life.

CHAPTER XX.

"Final ruin fiercely drives
Her ploughshare o'er creation."—YOUNG.

DURING the years 1862-3 Winchester constituted the shuttlecock in the great game of battledore between the Federal and Confederate armies. Now propelled forward by a blow from one, it flies to the other, where it only meets with the same treatment. And very much worsted too was the shuttlecock by the unusual length and earnestness of the game. For not only was the march of improvement in the town suspended, but the march of devastation had made rapid strides. The streets were a scene of ragged neglect, where the filth of years from the large armies which had occupied it had been permitted to accumulate, until the sickening effluvia which rose from them, tainting the air, sapped the life in the veins of those who breathed it. Rosy cheeks grew white under its influence, and firm steps faltered in the ordinary walks of life. Some houses had disappeared entirely, leaving wide gaps; in some places the blackened ruins told of the powerful aid which had been summoned by the demon of destruction, and in others were traces of entire buildings pulled down to help in the erection of fortifications. Nor did the structures still standing present a much more cheerful appearance, some being in the last stage of dilapidation, deprived of windows and doors, from the ragged apertures of which might

be seen peering the heads of mules and horses, people and animals living side by side and quite upon a social equality so far as accommodations went.

Around the town the belt of hills which had been dotted with pretty little groves, or noble forest trees either growing singly or in groups, were now naked and bare, and formed the groundwork for a formidable line of red fortifications crowned with their bristling cannon, which frowned down upon the rebellious town that had never during its long trial swerved from its allegiance to the South.

The policy of the different Federal commandants who had filled the post at Winchester towards the inhabitants was almost as various as their names. One would believe in coercive measures, and the citizens would be subjected to the severest annoyances, such as meaningless searches and serious deprivations, the oath of allegiance being the only price of exemption. The next would as far as possible ignore the women and children, and permit them to pursue the ordinary routine of their lives without let or hindrance. The next again, under an appearance of great indulgence and forbearance, would strive to lull into security the unwary, whilst he exercised a strict espionage over every household by means of regular spies, or negroes employed to act as such. The fact is that almost invariably they held exaggerated ideas of the power, influence, and knowledge possessed by the Southern women, believing that many of them held a regularly organized communication with the Confederate army, and possessed an intimate knowledge of its secret movements, etc. I need scarcely say that this was a ludicrous mistake, as they were far more ignorant of

the military plans and intentions of the Southern army than the Federals themselves. It is true that they placed the most implicit confidence in the startling rumors which filled the air, and were ready to believe any day that Jackson was at hand; and then too there is a characteristic in women which forbids their ever acknowledging perfect ignorance upon any subject, and their manner was often a laughable assumption of superior wisdom, with an expression denoting ability to throw light upon any subject whatever, did the will only second the motion; and the exercise of this innocent peculiarity was often the cause of serious trouble and annoyance.

Up to the winter of 1863, however, the actual suffering of the non-combatants of Winchester was very much confined to experiences inseparable from a state of war, and they read the accounts from New Orleans and other places with thankful hearts that their "lines were fallen to them in more pleasant places."

At that time, however, cause for congratulation ceased, as two stars arose upon the military horizon of Winchester almost at the same instant, whose appearance prognosticated evil to its inhabitants. They were styled in military phraseology, Generals Cluseret and Milroy.

The first-named of these stars introduced himself unfavorably to the citizens by the issue of a requisition upon the depleted larders of the town for five thousand pounds of bacon, which, if not forthcoming by a specified time, the town would be given up to the soldiery.

Terrible was the consternation of the people, as it was confidently believed that not half of that amount

could be raised; but it seems General Cluseret knew better, and his energetic proceedings were crowned with success. Indeed, so earnest was he in the pursuit of the Rebel meat that he constituted himself forage-master, and did not spare himself the humiliation of diving into the kitchens, garrets, and store-rooms, in order to the accomplishment of his end.

Here he proclaimed liberty to the negro, and in the moment of gushing confidence succeeding this proclamation, he contrived to elicit all the private information in their possession, and the result was — five thousand pounds of bacon, full weight, containing rot-eaten jowls and decayed middlings, the refuse of the abundant supplies which once stocked the meat-houses of the inhabitants.

An incident of some interest in connexion with this General, in view of later events, I place before my readers:

A young cousin of Ellen Randolph's, aged about fifteen years, who had been pursuing his education in Europe, arrived in Winchester on his way South. Hoping that his youthful face might pass him through the lines, he determined to seek an interview with General Cluseret. The headquarters were pointed out to him, and obtaining an entrance, he found himself in a luxurious apartment, where sat the self-styled Lafayette in the midst of orange and lemon trees and hot-house flowers.

The boy saw before him a tall, thick-set man, with a handsome face, set off by the national moustache and imperial. He was not dressed in the Federal uniform, but had evidently copied the costume of "*le grand militaire*," as he wore the high boots and nankeen shorts

which were such striking characteristics of the dress of that distinguished individual, and beside him on a chair lay a cocked hat.

His quick eye turned upon his young visitor as he entered the room, and he rose to his feet in surprise as the boy addressed him in his own language, telling him his story so far as it was necessary for him to know it. Finding that he was so recently from Paris, and that though so young, of more than ordinary intelligence, the conversation turned upon French politics, and the General asked:

"What is the opinion in France at present with regard to the American war?"

"Well, Monsieur le Général," replied the boy, "all of the respectable organs, *La France*, *La Patrie*, *Le Constitutionnel*, etc., reflecting the opinions of the higher classes, are warm partisans of the South. On the other hand, the Rouges and the Socialistes, represented by *L'Opinion Nationale*, sustain the North"

The General's reply is so interesting when read by the light of the Commune that we give it in his own words:

"Il vous faut savoir, mon petit monsieur, que ceux que vous appelez les Rouges et les Socialistes, c'est à dire les membres de la Ligue Républicaine, m'ont envoyé en Amérique pour les représenter dans cette guerre contre l'esclavage."

"Le petit monsieur" deemed it prudent to make no further allusion to the Rouges and Socialists. But the mischief was done, and all of his efforts to re-establish himself in the good graces of "M. le Général" were futile, and he was obliged to bow himself out without his passport, all for being too well-versed in French politics.

It was during the reign of Cluseret that the people were made to tremble at the prospect of still greater evils, for General Milroy was placed in command of the post of Winchester. His reputation had travelled before him, and the women knew that the time for girding up the loins of their minds had come, as their firmness and endurance were about to be put to a test of no ordinary power.

The first act of his administrative government was the issuing of a rapid succession of search-warrants, comprehending all of the Southern houses in the town, and exceeding in thoroughness and roughness of execution any which had preceded them. There was less discipline among his troops also, and a greater disregard of property rights than had heretofore been the case.

Good Mrs. Mason had been summoned to Richmond by the sad death of her son-in-law, Charles Marshall, he having been killed in one of the battles before Richmond, leaving his young widow wild with grief at his loss, and crying out for her mother as the only hope and comfort left her in her bereavement.

Her absence was severely felt by Mrs. Randolph and her daughter, as they had learned to regard her bright cheerfulness and living faith as essential elements to their endurance of the daily trials of their lives. Mrs. Randolph was one of those gentle, dependent creatures who, having happily been relieved from the necessity for exertion by others, had never in her life found out whether there was any strength of character in her composition. She must always have some one upon whom she could lean — her husband when he was at home, then Mrs. Mason, and now that this prop was withdrawn she

turned despairingly to Ellen (whom she had been in the habit of regarding as too young to be of any use in this line) as her only stay and support. Nor did she find herself so destitute as she expected, for the young girl proved fully equal to the present emergency, and with an instinctive knowledge of her superior strength, she made it her constant aim to shield her timid, delicate mother from the vicissitudes to which they were subject.

They were sitting together at work, about a week after General Milroy's arrival, in Ellen's room up stairs, which overlooked the main street of the town, when Mrs. Randolph exclaimed in a tone of alarm:

"Good gracious, Ellen, here is another provost-guard!"

"I should really think," said Ellen, going hastily to the window, "that General Milroy might be satisfied with his present knowledge of the contents of our establishment. This will make three times he will have searched the house since his arrival," and she left the room just as the door-bell sounded noisily through the house.

Mrs. Randolph followed her in a moment, and when she reached the hall she found Ellen had opened the door, through which could be seen about a dozen men. One of them, a stout Irishman, in Captain's uniform, was stating his business. Mrs. Randolph remembered him as having conducted the search of the day before.

"Faith, ma'am," said he, raising his cap and speaking with an unmistakable brogue, "I have an orrder here from Gineral Maleroy to priss some farniture for his sarvice, and remimbering that you had a plinty, I thot I might maybe find sum to suit him."

"I don't understand you," said Ellen, her cheek paling a little.

"Will now, I will say that's varry sthrange — 'tis me Irish brogue, I spose. Here, John Brown, come here and till the lady."

One of the party stepped forward and told in very unmistakable language that General Milroy was furnishing a house, down in the town, from the houses of the citizens.

"He thot," said the Irish Captain, "it a thousand pities that there should be so much good Ribble farniture in the town and he with niver a bed to lay himsilf on."

"Well," said Ellen, recovering at last from her stupefaction, and drawing a long breath as if she had just received the contents of a bucket of cold water on her head, "this is certainly a high-handed measure. Mamma, do you hear? General Milroy has sent up to take what furniture he needs out of this house without leave or license."

Mrs. Randolph raised her hands in dismay and beat the air helplessly, but said nothing.

Turning to the men, and speaking with a voice which quivered with the passion of indignation and anger, which she struggled in vain to suppress, Ellen said:

"You have no right to it, and you shan't have it!"

The man elevated his eyebrows, turned as if counting the men he had with him, and then glancing meaningly at the two helpless women, laughed, but said not a word.

They both understood him, and both acknowledged the truth which he wished to convey.

Mrs. Randolph was the first to speak. "Ellen, my child," she said, "what is the use of resisting? it only adds to our trouble. We have no means of carrying out our resistance."

"I wonder," said Ellen, without answering her mother, "that you are not all ashamed to come on such a mission."

"Faith and that am I," said the man, looking as if he enjoyed his shame; "but we have to obey orrders."

"It is nothing more nor less," said Ellen "than robbery."

"Ah now, that's hard on us. In pace it might be robbery, but in war it's prissing."

The men laughed at what they regarded as, at the same time, a good joke and an unanswerable argument.

"Why does not General Milroy buy what furniture he wants?" said Ellen, controlling herself with a great effort, and speaking in a low, quiet voice.

"Faith now, he thinks it's chaper to get it without the buying. But sure and he'll give ye a paper, promising to pay ye for the farniture at the end of the war, if ye have been a goot and loryal citizen. Now, byes, we'll git to wark at once. Ah!" moving out an old hall-sofa, covered with green morocco, "this will plase the Gineral intirely. He kin rist here whin he is clane broke down with the affairs of State. Take it out, byes."

Poor Mrs. Randolph! The tears came into her eyes as they followed the old piece of furniture, endeared to her by so many associations. How many scenes did it recall! gay scenes and sad ones. She remembered her own home-bringing, herself the bride entering her husband's home for the first time, and this sofa, with its look of homely comfort, was the first object which met her eye as she stepped across the threshold. Dead friends and absent friends had sat there with her. It had been the favorite meeting-place of the family in

the long warm summer evening. She saw it all Memory swept over her like a flood. It brought up from their graves her dead children, and they went clambering and tumbling over the old sofa, as full of life and gladness as they had been in the time so long ago They would have been men and women now, and all this time the old sofa had kept its place in the hall; and she grieved as over the disaffection and desertion of a tried friend. She wiped away her tears, and turned to find that the whole party of men, with Ellen, had disappeared. Following the sound of their voices, she found them standing beside a large, old-fashioned bedstead, with tall mahogany posts richly carved.

"Well now, by jabers, that's a fine bidstead, in troth that is. It's meself that was in the cabinet business once, and I knows good farniture when I sees it;" adding, as he felt over the mattress, "And sez I to the Gineral, sez I, there's jist the farniture to suit you, sez I, in the big red house on the hill there, maning this. He'll be plased, he will; this will suit him intirely."

Mrs. Randolph threw herself forward, the tears streaming from her eyes.

"Not this, gentlemen, not this; take anything in the house but this! Oh, gentlemen, are none of you fathers? Have none of you ever seen your little children die, and felt the place where they lay sacred to you ever afterwards? Four of mine went to heaven from here. Here I gave them my first and last kiss. Take anything but this!" and she passed her hand softly and tenderly over the pillow, as if the face of the dead and gone still lay there.

Ellen had followed the men around in silence, her fixed paleness and passion-marked face alone revealing

the extent of mental agitation under which she was suffering, her white lips pressed together as if in silence alone there was safety from the mad wrath which tossed her like a tempest in view of these outrages and her own utter helplessness to prevent it. Since the first exposure of this weakness, when she spoke of resisting their authority, she had not spoken a word, if a face so full of the meaning and expression of all that was passing in her mind could be said not to speak; but stepping forward now, she said, in a voice harsh and unmodulated:

"This you shall not touch! Go anywhere else; there is plenty of handsomer furniture up stairs, take what you please, but this you shall not have. I know I am only a woman, but I believe God would nerve my arm to resist you in the commission of such an outrage."

Whether they really feared to test her courage and did not care to use force with a woman when it could be avoided, or were touched by Mrs. Randolph's appeal (and most men have a soft spot near the centre of their hearts which the thought of a little dead child will touch), certain it is they walked very quietly after Miss Randolph out of the room and up the stairs. She led them to her own chamber, which had been tastefully and expensively furnished for the only daughter, and stood by composedly while it was dismantled, saw one article after another removed with hard dry eyes. Beatrice de Cenci might have worn some such expression as sat on her face now when she ordered the murder of her father.

At last it was over and the men gone. As Ellen closed and locked the door and turned back, her mother threw her arms around her, crying:

"Ah, my child! my child! what is to become of us?"

"God will take care of us, mother;" but with no return of tenderness and softness to her voice, "And I am thankful that He does punish the oppressor. May His punishment come swiftly to these men."

"Hush, my child! hush!" said Mrs. Randolph.

"I can't help it, Mamma. I do—I know it is not Christian or womanly to feel as I do now, and I shudder at the sight it has given me of my own heart. Oh, Mamma! Mamma! let's leave everything and go through to the South; these scenes will destroy us body and soul."

But this of course was impossible. They had to stay and protect, as far as they might, their home, until better times would restore the missing members of the household.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Necessity is the argument of tyrants."—WILLIAM PITT.

DURING the spring Mrs. Milroy arrived in Winchester. This may seem to be an unimportant event to the reader, but it was not so to the oppressed people of Winchester. In spite of General Milroy's gleanings from the different houses of the town, Mrs. Milroy was dissatisfied with her accommodations; a General's wife should be lodged with more magnificence. Mrs. Milroy had come to see the world, and she determined to see it only through rose-colored glasses, and this medium was not sufficiently abundant in the present headquarters to suit the wishes of the lady.

"Turn some of them Rebel women out," said she, "and let me have their house."

"Who shall I turn out?" said the indulgent Benedict, lifting his youngest hope upon his knee; "pick your house and you shall have it."

Little did the householders of the town guess how their fate hung in the balance of this decision. They saw the General's wife walking or riding around making diligent surveys, but were far from divining her purpose, nor was it an easy thing for her to decide. She felt quite fretted by the outlay of thought it required to choose a dwelling from so many. This was the finest house, and those the finest grounds; this was too far off the streets, and that would be hot and dusty in summer. Day after day passed and still the decision was not made.

It is a misfortune when one's resources are inexhaustible; or at least Mrs. Milroy began to think so. If she only had half a dozen to choose from, it would be better. "Oh, well," she thought at last, "it makes no difference. If I don't like it I can change it;" and forthwith the decision was made, and she stood by in silent admiration of the genius of the man who could, as it were by the waving of a wand, provide fine houses for his family. She felt almost as if they were living in the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, and General Milroy were the good Genius, and she one of the many fortunate princesses who were created for the special purpose of being the recipients of all the favors fortune and magic could heap upon them.

True to his word, General Milroy announced to his wife that the chosen house would be vacated that afternoon. "The women made a great fuss," said he, "but the men quite enjoyed the fun; and I will send them through the lines this afternoon."

Mrs. Milroy thought it would be fun too, so she made ready her household for the move, and was at the door of her new residence before the time fixed upon for the flitting of the former owners. She became quite impatient at the little delay.

"General Milroy ought to make 'em make haste; the children will take cold in this damp air."

Here they come at last though — a delicate invalid lady and her three daughters — down the steps and into the ambulance which was to convey them on their journey, exiles from their home, at which they cast a backward glance of regret.

Mrs. Milroy, with little of the sensitive delicacy which of right should have characterised that lady, tripped

from her vehicle, followed by her brood, and hurrying as if in fear that the deposed sovereigns might not see her triumph, installed herself in her new home before their very eyes.

I have once or twice touched with a tender hand upon some little failing of my sex with no unloving heart, but simply for the purpose of illustrating truth. In this same spirit I would add to my former criticisms by calling attention to another characteristic of woman. It may be properly styled a love of relating incidents. It is in one view of it a very virtue, arising from a desire for sympathy; in another it leads to the evil which has given women a reputation amongst men as gossips, mischief-makers, great talkers, and, if it must be confessed, dangerous persons. It was this characteristic which made Ellen Randolph restless and miserable until she could pour into some listening ear the story of the Milroy trials, beginning with the impressment of their furniture and ending with the banishment of Lucas.

But whom could she tell? The fact was patent to the town; and although she might talk it over with Julia Bell or some other of her friends, and both glean and give some new particulars, as what Mrs. Lucas turned and said as she left the house, and what Mrs. Milroy said as she entered the house, yet it was not like being able to give every fact new, racy, and exciting to a fresh audience; and for this opportunity Ellen Randolph actually pined.

A vent for her pent-up feelings offered itself sooner than she expected; most unfortunately, as it turned out. We have casually mentioned a young officer of the Federal army who by the chances of war was

thrown upon the tender mercies of the ladies on Fort Hill. The simple incident proved the starting-point for a train of circumstances which lasted with their effects through the entire war. The young man had continued desperately ill for many weeks, and after some time his mother and brother came on to assist in nursing him. The lady proved to be a highly accomplished and agreeable inmate of the Southern household, in spite of the radical difference in politics between them. The young invalid, too, was a tie between them, and they found it was impossible to remember that they were enemies beside his bed, where all were equally anxious to render him such service as his condition required. So it ended in a warm friendship between the parties, and when after about six weeks passed together the young man was able to be removed, they parted with warm expressions of sympathy and affection; and upon this had been reared a correspondence between Ellen and the stranger, which, though only carried on in a scattering, irregular manner, was nevertheless productive of a good deal of pleasure to both. Ellen in her letters gave graphic pictures of their lives of change and excitement, all which were very interesting to her correspondent, living as she did "under her own vine and fig-tree, with none to molest and make her afraid."

Well, as ill luck would have it, a letter arrived from this lady just when Ellen's necessity to *relate* became almost uncontrollable, and she determined to answer it at once and relieve herself of the burden which was becoming too heavy to bear. For obvious reasons she chose fictitious names for her real characters. I give a quotation from the letter:

". . . And now before you read farther I want you to take your Bible, and turning to the 21st chapter of 1st Kings, read the chapter, and then listen while I give you a second edition of it from our lives.

"Our Naboth the Rebel had a house in a very pleasant garden, where he had surrounded himself with everything which was suitable for the comfort and convenience of his household; and when he went off to the wars, he left his wife and daughters well provided for.

"Now it happened that this beautiful house of Mr. Naboth's was hard by the headquarters of General Ahab, then Commandant of the post at Winchester; and General Ahab, casting his eyes upon it and remarking its commodiousness, its fair proportions and its admirable situation, desired it with a great desire. Daily would he bend his steps or his horse's steps in the direction of this house, and hourly did he present the question to himself, how could he accomplish his ends? After some time this perplexity and this ungratified desire so preyed upon the mind of Ahab that his countenance showed the traces of his trouble, and he would return from the daily inspection of the coveted possession heavy and displeased.

"Now what a man lacks in himself he often finds in his wife, and this was the case with General Ahab. Seeing him thus going about daily as under a burden, Jezebel, his wife, went unto him one day and said unto him: 'Why art thou sad, and why eatest thou no supper?' And Ahab answered: 'Because I want the house of Naboth for my headquarters, and I cannot get it.' Then said Jezebel unto him: 'Dost thou indeed command the post of Winchester and wantest what

thou darest not take! Get up directly and eat thy supper, and I will give thee the house of Naboth.'

"So Ahab arose and ate his supper, and committed the cause to Jezebel, confident that she would accomplish her pleasure without assistance.

"Then Jezebel wrote an order in Ahab's name, and sealed it with his seal, and sent it to the Captain of his Provost-Guard, saying: 'Take with thee at an early hour on the morrow a guard of some dozen men, and go to the house of Naboth the Rebel, and search it diligently; be not sparing of thy patriotic talk, and provoke the women to answer. Report to me when thou returnest.'

"So the Captain of his Guard did as he had said, and the result was what might have been expected. The words of the women were reported to General Ahab, and he saw in them ample ground for their banishment from the town. So the order was issued; and with a guard over them, to see that they took nothing out of the house, the women proceeded to get themselves ready to start that evening.

"Now, Mrs. Lucas was weak and sickly in body, and the physician had ordered a medicine for her recovery, compounded from the fat of the cod-fish liver. And she said unto the Captain of the Guard: 'Give me one of my silver spoons that I may have wherewithal to take my medicine prescribed for me by my physician.'

"Then answered the Captain of the Guard wrathfully: 'Thou wife of a perverse and rebellious man, thinkest thou that my General will permit thee to take from this house any of the valuables it contains? No; they are lawfully confiscated for thy rebellion. Ahab himself has use for thy silver,' and he walked away to

order that a closer watch should be kept upon the silver and the gold, the hangings of the windows and the silken garments, as nothing of all these should go to strengthen the hands of this most wicked rebellion against the best Government the sun ever shone upon."

It must be confessed that our young heroine felt a wicked pleasure in writing this letter. The parallel she had succeeded in making pleased her extremely, though in her inmost heart she knew it was a departure from her usual prudence. This consciousness prevented her from showing the letter to her mother, as that lady would undoubtedly have forbidden her sending it. It also made her hesitate and sit thoughtfully before she sealed the envelope. The result of her cogitations may be gathered from an impatient exclamation she gave as she moistened the envelope and closed it tightly: "Oh, well, my letters to her never have been opened; and one can't be prudent always. Just this once, and if I get off I never will write so again."

She directed it to Mrs. Commodore ——, U. S. N., in very large letters, hoping that the loyal direction would save it from inspection. Taking it to the office herself, she presented it to the military postmaster who officiated, saying to him nonchalantly:

"I sealed my letter without remembering that you might want to examine it; but I can easily put it in another envelope."

"No," said the man, looking diligently at the direction; "I suppose she is loyal?"

"Oh yes, very," said Ellen, elevating her eyebrows; "you see she is the wife of a Commodore."

"No," said the man, throwing the letter down, "we

are not permitted to examine letters to officers or their wives. That can pass."

Now, notwithstanding this last assertion and promise, if Ellen Randolph had returned in another minute she would have seen this same postmaster manipulating her letter very suspiciously. Holding it up between him and the light, and after hesitating a moment, as if so much tribute should be paid to his conscience, he proceeded to open the letter. Instead of taking it, as he undoubtedly should have done, as an exposition of Bible facts, he hurried off with it to Milroy.

CHAPTER XXII.

"—— My true and honorable wife,
As dear to me as the ruddy drops
That visit my sad heart."—SHAKSPEARE.

"Now, tell the truth, sir: have you seen anything half as beautiful since you left home?" The speaker was Margaret Murray.

"I can freely answer 'no' to that," said her husband, stooping his tall head into the crib and kissing the baby face which lay pillowed there.

It was a pretty domestic picture, complete in all its parts, and the individuals composing it were not unworthy representatives of a happy marriage — both so well matched in their noble height; he with his rugged comeliness and she with her queenly beauty, now all softened and radiant with the happiness which his unexpected arrival had brought, and that rare specimen of babyhood upon whom Nature had lavished so bounteously her gifts. Art in its greatest triumphs never approached the exquisite beauty which God vouchsafes to parents, rich and poor alike — a dancing, glad "well-spring" of joy in the household; and as we look at this picture of infantile beauty before us, we exclaim with the exulting young mother: "Did God ever create anything more beautiful?"

Uncontaminated by the soil of life, fresh from the hand of his Maker, His last, best work in miniature—a thornless bud, an immortal soul unconscious of its immortality, the germ of an unknown future, a seed from which might spring the lofty oak spreading its

branches and its roots afar, or the scrubby shrub blasted and dwarfed by the east wind.

A baby is a solemn as well as a glad thing. This one lay, however, peacefully unconscious of either solemnity or gladness, unless the half smile which dwelt upon the rosy lips was the comment upon some baby-dream which stirred his brain. The balmy breath came softly and healthfully between the parted lips, and a row of pearly teeth filled up the vacancy; his long dark eye-lashes rested upon a cheek where the lily and the rose delighted to mingle their purest hues, while his hair towsled and tumbled in rings of curl about his white brow.

Margaret had drawn down the coverlid to show how much he had grown, and his softly-rounded dimpled limbs, displacing with their restless movement the white slip in which he was dressed, shone as only baby flesh can, with a coloring, a texture and a delicious softness which nothing but the God of Nature ever made.

No wonder Robert Murray, with one arm around the woman whom of the whole world he would have chosen as his wife, and his other hand caressingly smoothing back the baby's hair, should have exclaimed: "God is very good to me! He has taken such care of my darlings. I thank Him for it!"

"Didn't you pray for us every day?" It was a question simple enough for a child to have asked, and was all the more beautiful coming from her.

"Of course I did. I could not have lived from day to day, knowing the dangers to which you were subjected, had I not felt that 'Our Father' had you in His holy keeping, just where I had placed you when I left you,

and where I put you afresh every hour of every day since," and he bent over and kissed her.

Changing her position, she put her two arms about his neck, and said with the gladdest earnestness in her voice: "Thank God! for bringing my husband back to me."

But baby has been a little shaken out of his composure by these demonstrations; and his half-open eyes not fully comprehending the scene, and with a sad lack of penetration, coming to the conclusion that this great bearded monster was doing something dreadful to "Mamma," commenced a little frightened whimper which at once constituted him again the centre of attraction. It was very reassuring to see his captive Mamma released, and to feel himself in her arms, the recipient of her loving kisses; but still the great serious eyes dwelt upon the stranger, as if there was some link to be taken up between the past and the present which his baby-memory refused to supply.

"Why, don't you know your father, boy? That's your papa. Where is Papa?"

He pointed to the effigy of his papa which hung upon the wall, but resolutely refused to recognise any more palpable living essence in that relation.

"Pshaw, how provoking!" said Margaret, really worried. "Show him your watch, Robert."

He seemed to distinguish the watch with a rather higher degree of regard than the man, but was still somewhat indifferent to the whole concern.

"Now let me manage matters," said Mr. Murray, aroused at Margaret's annoyance; and seating himself in a large arm-chair, he drew her with the baby in her arms upon his knees, and trusted to the influence

of time and their united relations to overcome the evident antipathy of his son and heir for his person.

"Ah me! it is very delightful to be here again."

"If it would only last," said Margaret.

"Well, don't blot out the light of God's sun with your own clouds," said he, smiling.

"Yes, but I think you would take to cloud-making too if you had to be left to the dreadful Yankees."

"I don't expect you have many troubles which are not mine; only greater because of conflicting duties, and the having to surrender my position as your protector, leaving you to endure discomforts from which I have no power to free you."

She looked up in surprise at the feeling expressed in his voice, and never doubted afterwards who had the largest share of the troubles of their lives.

"Your father and myself are thinking of moving you all to Richmond," continued Mr. Murray. "The war is growing more fierce as it progresses, and there is less prospect of its ending soon now than when it began. If he can get a tenant for the house I think we will go."

"Oh, that would be delightful!" said Margaret, her face fairly beaming with the anticipation.

"My only doubt on the subject is this," said her husband: "whether, or not, it is right to crowd Richmond with food-consumers, now that everything is getting so high and scarce."

"Oh, well, we won't eat much, will we, Robby, if Papa will only take us with him?"

Robby answered "No" very stoutly and decidedly; it being one of the few words he could say, he made the most of it.

There was a knock at the door, and Mary made her appearance.

"Well, I think that is a family chair," said she, laughing at the closely united family party.

"Yes, we are going to housekeeping in some such apartment," said Mr. Murray, "as Margie tells me that Sarah has gone off with all of our valuables."

"Indeed she has. If you could only see Glen Burnie now! I really do not think you would know the place — everything torn to pieces. The last we heard from there was that Sarah had gone, and the soldiers were sleeping all over the house except the kitchen, which they had generously given up to the horses."

"Hum!" ejaculated Mr. Murray, but his face showed how sensitively he was touched at the idea of the desecration of his pretty little home, where Margie and himself had found such simple and true happiness. Folding his arm tighter around his wife and boy, however, he said:

"It is hard; but with such blessings spared I have no room for complaint."

"Oh, pshaw!" said Mary, in pretended disgust; "you married people are so disagreeable; you don't think or care for anybody but yourselves."

"Oh, yes," said Margie, laughing gleefully, "we let in our friends on the outskirts of our hearts, while we keep the centre place, where it is warmest."

"Look! look at the baby!" exclaimed Mr. Murray.

Yes, the wonderful baby had caught an idea at last. During the whole time he had been sitting perfectly quiet, his sober eyes, still with the remains of sleep in them, travelling from the familiar picture on the wall to its living counterpart beside him, and now a light

breaking all over his baby face, and pointing from one to the other, he said:

"One Papa — two Papa!"

He certainly was a wonderful child for two years old. Margie said so, and she ought to know; and Mr. Murray and Mary confirmed her, so the fact no longer admitted a doubt. Margie even expressed it as her opinion that his early development of talent could not lead in a position short of the Presidency of the Confederate States, or a position either in the pulpit or the forum, where listening thousands would hang upon his lips. They were very foolish, doubtless, but happy people often are, and enjoy their foolishness too.

It was a sudden check which Mary's frightened exclamation gave to the group. She had been standing at the window looking down the road, and now cried out:

"Yankees! Yankees! Oh, brother! hide! hide! The road is full of them, and they are coming as fast as they can!"

Before she had done speaking they had joined her at the window, and received confirmation of her alarming news from the sight which met their eyes. About fifty men in blue uniforms were rapidly approaching the house.

Margaret threw her arms around her husband, and for the space of a second everything was in confusion; only a moment, however, as there was no time for the indulgence of agitation. Every one must act promptly and decisively.

"Mary," said Captain Murray, "try and make your way out of the house, and if there is a negro on the place you can trust, have my horse turned out in the woods. They must not find him here."

Mary was gone almost before he had finished speaking.

"Now," continued he, turning to his wife and Mrs. Holcombe, who had just come in dismayed, "you two know the house better than I do. Think of some place to hide me, for if I mistake not, the man who rides at the head of that column is my old enemy, Dr. Burton" (Margie had told him of their encounter), "and I would fare badly if he got hold of me."

The very thought seemed to nerve Margaret Murray. "Mamma," she said, "manage to keep them down stairs five minutes, and I will arrange for him."

All this passed so rapidly that the five minutes had almost elapsed before they had time to dismount and reach the house up the long flight of steps from the lawn. At once they surrounded the house, and about twenty men, with Burton at their head, unceremoniously entered the house. Mrs. Holcombe met them at the door, deadly pale but not otherwise discomposed.

"Ah, madam, I hope I see you well," said Burton, showing his teeth, and trying to cover over his expression of wicked triumph with an insinuating address.

"Quite well, I thank you," said the lady. "To what do we owe the pleasure of Dr. Burton's presence?"

"To the desire, madam, to be the first to pay my respects to my old friend, Captain Murray," and he looked at her keenly, nor did it escape him that her eyes closed for a second as if in prayer, while her cheek grew paler.

"I am happy to say that Dr. Burton will not find my brother here to-day," was the evasive answer as she framed her lips into the miserable ghost of a smile.

"Excuse me, but I must contradict you. I am sorry to interrupt the blissful reunion with his wife; but my desire to renew my acquaintance with him is so intense that I cannot even wait for the ordinary ceremony," and he directed three of the men to remain below, and the rest to ascend the stairs with him. He had scarce, however, placed his foot on the bottom step when they heard a voice singing a nursery-tune, and Margaret Murray, with her baby in her arms, appeared above him, coming down. She started very naturally when she came in view of the armed men, but in an instant was her calmest, coolest, most dignified self, and seemed only intent upon quieting the little boy who clung frightened to her.

Burton was not easily deceived, however. He came upon definite information, and knew the perfect self-control of the woman before him too well to allow it to affect him. So when she came forward and said with well-affected surprise:

"Dr. Burton! we had no idea you were in the neighborhood, or that you would care to pay poor old Rose Hill a visit, knowing as you did her empty larder."

"If her larder is empty, madam," he said, with one of those contortions of the lips which could scarcely be called a smile, though it showed his double row of white teeth, "I believe her population has been increased by the arrival of Captain Murray, to whom I wish to pay my respects."

"It is a pity you should be too late," said she, smiling. "You would doubtless both of you have experienced equal pleasure in the meeting."

"My dear Mrs. Murray, you are a very good ac-

tress," said the Doctor, "but it does not deceive me in the least. I act upon positive information, and must see my old friend if — if — yes, ma'am," — bowing to her, and speaking in a low, meaning tone — "I may as well say it, if I have to tear the old house down brick by brick."

If there had been less at stake she must have succumbed before the menace in the tone more than the words. But Margaret Murray knew that by her wit and her self-control alone could she save her husband and the greater her apprehension the more serene her composure.

"That will be hardly necessary," she said. "There are not many nooks and corners at Rose Hill where a man of my husband's size could hide," and he thought she triumphed in his very size, while in spite of himself he could not help feeling dwarfed by the comparison he knew she was making.

"But," she went on, "if we desired it, we know how irresistible Dr. Burton is when he comes with an army at his back, and we would not venture to deny him anything he asks. The house is open to him; he can go where he pleases. We would like, if we thought it any use to ask, that our private apartments might be left unmolested, but we know too well what the answer would be."

Her quick glance took in the fact that the men who followed him were not unimpressed, though he was as confident as ever.

"I suppose," she continued, "I may go with you as conductor. The house is a large one, and you might become bewildered; and who knows, in these war times, that you might not encounter bushwhackers at some obscure corner?" and she laughed.

It seemed to be an unpleasant suggestion, and one or two of the men drew back. Upon her answering for their safe-conduct, however, and herself going before, they followed very willingly.

Putting her baby in Mrs. Holcombe's arms, she went before the long line of armed men up the long staircase with as stately a step as in the days of her greatest prosperity.

"I venture to make a suggestion," she said, well knowing that the very circumstance would inaugurate an opposite course, "and that is that you begin at the very top of the house and come down. You will then be able to satisfy yourself that no spot has been passed over."

"Never mind, madam," said Burton, with a smile; "we would prefer dispensing with your valuable suggestions. We will, I think, begin here, by your leave," and he unceremoniously opened the door of her room.

Even her self-control almost gave way as she saw her chamber, where but a few moments since she had been so happy, desecrated by the presence of these men. One or two of them seemed to feel the sting it must give her, and without permission drew back on the threshold. She understood them, and smiled as she passed gratefully. She might have been mistaken, but she could not help thinking that Burton intended a thrust at her in every movement he made in that room — there was such an unnecessary exactness and thoroughness in the search; the most impossible places were looked into.

"Your keys, madam," he said, as he tried one of her bureau drawers.

"Surely," she said, handing them to him, "you do not expect to find my husband there?"

He laughed. "No; but it will not be amiss to look for traces of him."

Ah, how that proud woman loathed the thought that in her mistaken youth she had ever had any connection with this man, who, with cool and impertinent indelicacy, fingered her clothing. If he intended to move her out of her stolid composure he succeeded, as with her face flaming with indignation she interposed, and closing the drawer said:

"Surely this is unnecessary, sir! Your business is to hunt for my husband, not to insult me!"

He only shrugged his shoulders and smiled gratifiedly over his small revenge upon this woman, whom he would almost have sacrificed his life to conquer, to see her humiliated, in his power; but so far, do what he would she seemed to rise triumphant above his efforts, untouched and unassailable in her pride as ever. Ah, how he groaned and gnashed his teeth with rage at his impotency, and vowed that through him she loved best she should become what in his wickedness and hate he so fiercely longed to see her. But it did not seem as if he was to be gratified even here, for the search progressed without sign of result; every room, from garret to cellar, and even to the top of the house, the way to which led up through a dark loft, into which some of the men ventured timidly, remembering her untimely little joke about the bushwhackers. Margaret sat down on the steps and watched them, with no shade of anxiety on her face or in her manner, herself every now and then pointing out a pile of rubbish which had eluded their vigilance. Even Burton began to doubt at last; he could not believe that any spot had escaped him.

Though discouraged and wearied with the earnestness of his efforts, Captain Brown — for we will hereafter give him the name by which he was known to his companions — still tried to devise new resources. Again and again did he return and search some more suspicious spot over again, as if he could not bear to give up this precious morsel of revenge just as it had touched his lips.

A third time he reached the front hall, where all his men were collected, waiting orders. Flushed with the exertion he had been making, baffled in his evil designs, he stood irresolute, his military cap in one hand, and with the other wiping the perspiration from his brow. Turning suddenly upon Margaret, where she stood calm and resolute at a little distance, he was sure he caught an expression of relief, a brightness, perhaps of triumph, upon her face. In an instant it was gone, but he could not divest himself of the idea that it had been there. He ordered the search to begin again. With increased interest the men followed and aided him. Margaret would have remained behind, but he insisted upon her accompanying him, and she felt that his eyes were ever on her face, scanning it eagerly, almost fiercely, for some change of expression which would be a guide to him. But she was on her guard now; and when that was the case, with her husband's liberty and perhaps life to be played for, Margaret Murray could defy the closest inspection; but she was wearied, and showed it, particularly when again he turned towards the steps leading from the top story of the house to the loft.

"I can go no further, Dr Burton," she said faintly, though even his keenest investigation could detect no approach to uneasiness in her manner.

Even the rough soldiers seemed to feel for her; she had been so uncomplaining before, so brave through it all.

"Well, Captain, I guess we will have to give it up," said one. "I don't think a mouse could have escaped us to-day; let's go."

He hesitated, then turned to her. "If you will give me your word that this husband of yours is not under this roof, I will believe you and go away."

"God keep her firm now." "God help me to trust Him and do my duty," were the prayers which ascended from two hearts; the one rising in the darkness and confinement of his narrow hiding-place under those very stairs against which she leaned, and the other as an echo from the heart of the woman who stood there with that undaunted front, but where the blood beneath the surface beat and dashed in wild commotion.

"Dr. Burton has neither been kind nor considerate enough to me to merit any confidence at my hands. He has had no restrictions placed upon his will, let him finish his search; I will go with him," and hastily mounting the stairs she stepped out first upon the roof of the house, where the pure air of heaven came like a boon to cool her heated brow, bringing to her tried heart the confidence that the gracious Father who thus cared for the small needs of His children would not forsake her now; nor did He. Down again they tramped by the point where her heart stood still, and the search of the house was over. As the men went out gladly to mount their horses, Captain Brown returned.

"Madam," he said, "I am foiled, but not convinced.

Your woman's wit may have saved your husband this time. But take warning; I shall have my watchers around, and if I find that it is as I suspect, and he is concealed in this house, I shall hold you accountable for it."

She bowed her lofty head as graciously as a queen to a lowly subject, and turned away without a word. Even at the last, then, she had made him feel small and impotent. Could he have read her heart, he would have seen, "How puny his paltry assertions of power seem when God reigns in the heavens and over the earth!"

She heard his loud voice in command to his men, saw the whole party ride off in the direction of the negro-quarters; and although she knew that he would certainly find out there that Captain Murray had been there during the day, yet not one fear crossed her. She knew that the same God who struck with blindness the enemies of His servant Lot, so that they "wearied themselves to find the door," was watching over her. She saw them from where she stood, talking long and earnestly to the people, and then ride off to the stables. But the horse was gone, and they were forced to conclude that he had made his escape. Quietly she waited there until she saw them return; and when the last horse and its rider entered the grove, forgetting fatigue and everything else, up the stairs she flew to release her dear prisoner.

The hiding-place was a favorite one with her when she was a child. The steps leading from the loft to the top of the house, though having every appearance of stability and firmness, were in reality so constructed that by the removal of some props and folding them under,

they could be made to disappear entirely in an aperture arranged for them in the wall. It was in this cramped niche that Mr. Murray had remained all of these hours, and from this he emerged as the sound of his wife's voice announced to him that the danger for the present was over. In a moment she was in his arms, the resolute woman all lost and weeping like a very child on his bosom.

"My brave wife! My darling!" he said.

"Don't, don't, Robert! don't give me any credit about it; God did it all. I never could have stood the long trial if I had not felt that our prayers were going up together, and that He would bring you out safe."

"And what made you stop just at my hiding-place?" said he in talking it over with her afterwards, while Mary kept watch at the window.

"Because I saw one of the men who had sympathised with me very much throughout, going round to investigate more closely, and he would have found you. I knew I could recall him by an appeal to his sympathies, which I could make truly, as I was perfectly worn out."

At midnight he made his escape, with Uncle Bob's assistance; but treacherous eyes marked his flitting — a spy from the household, paid to be on the watch through the entire night, and the next morning the fact was reported to Captain Brown, who raged like a wild animal at the news, and with awful oaths swore that the woman who had thus far been the bane of his life, should triumph no longer, but that very night should recognise him as master.

Before he left, Margaret, unable to bear up against these accumulated trials, obtained from her husband a

promise that the next sweep of the armies over the country he would, with Mr. Holcombe's consent, remove the whole family to Richmond.

"But remember, my brave darling," said he, "that He who has brought you hitherto will not forsake you now. And though He should bring trials greater than you have yet conceived of, it is only the fire which consumes the dross and leaves the pure gold, and is kindled by a loving Father's hand."

It was not long before she had cause to recall those parting words. But we will not anticipate.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"On Monday morning, just at ten o'clock,
As Ellen hummed 'The Young May Moon' the while,
Her ear was startled by tha double knock
Which thrills the nerves like an electric shock."—HOOD.

THREE days passed over the family in the old red house on Fort Hill after the events narrated a few pages back. Three uneventful quiet days passed by the mother and daughter in sober home-intercourse, shut out as far as possible from the outside present, and living in the past and future; quiet days filled up with talk of absent friends, from whom they were now so sadly separated. Once or twice Ellen's thoughts had travelled off after her letter, and she smiled to think of how cleverly she had drawn *that parallel;* she even half wished in her daring temerity that Milroy could have had a sight of it.

She was sitting one day with her work in hand, turning over in her mind whether she might not venture, now the danger was over, to make Mamma laugh over her pleasant conception, when the door-bell rang. In times of peace the ring of a door-bell is a matter either of minor importance or of congratulation, as ushering in to the domestic circle some dear or congenial friend; but in time of war it always brings with it a thrill of apprehension, as the herald of misfortune.

Ellen's face therefore flushed as she went to open it.

"Good morning, ma'am," said a tall, slim specimen of manhood who stood in the porch, as he fixed his eyes of beady brightness on Ellen's face: "your name's Randolph, I presume?"

"It is, sir," said the young lady.

"Waal now, I've got a letter here, wrote by one of you," drawing as he spoke Ellen's incendiary epistle from his pocket.

There was no doubt in the mind of the man who was the writer, when he saw the blood recede from the young girl's face, while all the results of her folly suddenly rose up before her.

"Let me see," she said tremulously, holding out her hand for the letter, more to give herself time for thought than from any idea that she could glean information from its contents.

"No, I thank you, ma'am," said the man, rudely putting the letter behind him, "this here letter's too walable for you to ketch hold on," walking into the house at the same time.

His manner went very far towards restoring the lost equilibrium of Ellen Randolph. If a lady sees herself in danger of insult, her instinct teaches her that the best protection is in dignified coolness; so she said, seating herself and facing the inevitable:

"Oh well, it is a matter of no importance. Mrs. —— is my correspondent, and I know all the contents of the letter."

"You do, do you? Well, don't you feel skeared at the consequens to you of that there letter?"

"Not very much," said Ellen, after some compromise with her conscience. "One should never be afraid of telling the truth."

"Truth!" said the man: "why, this letter, young 'oman, is a very volume of lies."

"Sir!" said the young lady, rising indignantly, "how dare you speak in that way to me!"

"Oh, shur now, they ain't no use puttin' on any o' your yairs with me. I is an old man, with gals o' my own, en I knows 'em from a to izzard; en I knows how to broke 'em in, too, the same as a hoss."

"Then as I decline being broke in the same as a horse, I shall have to avoid disagreeable consequences by leaving the room," and the young lady rose up to put her threat into execution.

But it seems Miss Randolph forgot that she was not quite her own mistress, for interposing himself between her and the door, the man said:

"Waal now, look yere, young 'oman, you jist set down thar whar you is. I don't want to have no fuss, but you ain't goin' to leave this room tell I talk over this yere matter."

Ellen had no option and took her seat.

Taking his stand so as to guard the door, the man again took up the letter.

"You sez, I think, that you wrote this yere letter?"

Ellen bowed her head in dignified response.

"Waal, I s'pose you knows what your punishment will be fur this bit o' treason?"

"I suppose," said she, with bitter sarcasm, "that I will be sent to Dixie for speaking the truth. It is not a virtue which can be tolerated on this side of the lines, and that punishment, as we Winchester people know, is the order of the day."

"No; you'll be imprisoned in a fort during the war," said the man, with a threatening emphasis of his head and voice.

Ellen Randolph's blood was up, and she could more easily have laid her head on the block with the gleaming steel above it than to have showed signs of fear

before this man who thus lowered himself to the task of intimidating a woman. Her lip curled contemptuously as she said:

"I am no child to be frightened by scarecrows. Well do I know that General Milroy would hesitate long before my story was presented to his Government for investigation. I have but spoken the truth, in strong terms it may be, but the fact admitted of no other. You can send me to Dixie without the matter being canvassed beyond this town, but I am not in the least apprehensive about anything else."

"One effective shot lost," acknowledged the man to himself, and he fell back upon a series of philosophising arguments about the impropriety of such conduct in general and this item in particular, all which seemed to be eminently satisfactory to himself, but rather exhausting to the nerves of the young lady whose fate just now hung in a very delicate balance. Interrupting at the point where endurance ceased to be a virtue, she said.

"I would prefer, if you have no objection, waiving this whole question of expediency and returning to the matter immediately under discussion. The deed is done now, and it is no use to regret. It only remains for me to hear what you intend to do with that letter."

Thus brought up suddenly, and made to face the question, "Waal, ef you'll promise me that you won't do so no more never again," said the man, losing himself hopelessly in this crowd of negatives, and turning the letter over in his hand, "I'll burn the letter."

Ellen Randolph half smiled as she recalled the days of her childhood, with its sins and punishments averted by a promise "to be good and not do so any more,"

but it did not prevent a sufficient infusion of indignation with the thought to flush her cheek to a deeper crimson as she said:

"I decline to submit to any dictation from you, sir, or to bind myself by any promises which a recurrence of such acts as this may make it impossible for me to keep. But I don't believe General Milroy has any real right to punish me for a mere personal offence. I have done nothing against his Government; on the contrary, in the last part of my letter to my friend I said that I knew that the United States Government would disclaim such acts, and that I knew it was only the petty tyranny of the Post Commander."

"Yes, but you'd have sent it to his own people."

"And is not General Milroy willing that his actions should be submitted to the investigation of his own people?"

"Waal, it ain't no use to talk about this no longer," said this negative character, taking the only avenue he saw to escape from a lost field. "I'm a good friend of these Winchester people; I've done 'em many a good turn that they don't know — have watched over 'em like a father."

"Rather like a spy," said Ellen. "I think I have heard of you; you are Captain Purdy, the detective."

"That's my name, madam. Nuthin' agin' the name, I hope?"

"No," said Miss Randolph, "not against the name, for I often feel sorry for an innocent name which suffers from its mere connection with its owner."

"Look yere, young 'oman, you're too peart by half; but fur all that I feel kindly disposed to you. I must take this letter down town now, but I raly think I'll

come back in about two hours and burn it; so you needn't be afeard about it agin'."

"Why not burn it now?" said she; "what is the use of taking it away at all?"

"Waal, you know, I've tuk a oath to do my duty, en I've never yit broke a oath. En what's more," raising his voice and speaking emphatically, as if he were announcing a fact of wonderful significance, "I've got three brothers, en we none of us has ever broke a oath!" and he nodded his head, as who should say, "There's an honorable family for you; beat that if you can!"

Ellen answered with a laugh which grated painfully in its lack of mirth and fulness of bitterness.

"Ah, indeed! We do not account that so worthy of remark in this country. We have several large families in the South who have been equally scrupulous."

The soul of honor looked somewhat taken down from the pedestal he had erected for himself by the news.

"Waal, at any rate," said he, with a manifest effort to keep himself up to the mark, "I must go down en read my oath over en see what it tells me to do; fur if it orders me to give you up to punishment, bad as I'd hate it I'll do it."

"Do you expect to find in it a special specification with regard to my letter?" said Ellen; "if so, it must be a very comprehensive oath."

This last stroke placed him completely under the weather, and he made no answer save to rise hastily and make off, as if afraid to utter another word which would provoke an encounter of wits. All Ellen heard as he left the house was—

"Waal, I'll come back in two hours."

Now, although Ellen Randolph stood her ground bravely in this battle, it was with a sinking heart that she now forced herself to look the danger in the face, and much would she have given if her one act of folly could have been undone. Her mother was so utterly dependent upon her, so delicate and timid, that her daughter thought with dread amounting to horror of her being taken from her; but she was forced to think of and provide against this possible contingency. At first she thought she would not tell her anything about it, but trust to her possible escape from the danger; but further consideration convinced her that such a course would be unwise, and going to her at once she told her the entire story. Agitated and excited Mrs. Randolph certainly was, but bore it altogether better than Ellen had anticipated.

The two hours specified by Purdy passed by and he did not return. The day wore itself away and still there was no news of him. Towards evening the story spread through the town of threatened trouble to the Randolphs, and their friends flocked up to offer sympathy and counsel, though no one could offer help. It was a case which depended upon the caprice of a single man, and things must take their course.

The night passed in troubled thought to Ellen. She could not divest herself of the fear that the danger was not yet over, though the length of time which had elapsed since Purdy's visit rather authorised the hope that the offence had been passed over. Mrs. Randolph regarded it in that light, and rose from her pillow with spirits renewed by her night's rest.

"Well," said Ellen, as the two stood together in the

hall after breakfast, "I shall be better satisfied after the day is over. I confess I do not feel safe yet."

"Well, I do," said her mother; "I feel confident that if they intended to carry out the threat it would have been done yesterday."

Her confidence in her own convictions, however, was not proof against the loud ring of the door-bell, which robbed her cheek of every ray of color, and sent her staggering and reeling across the passage.

"Mamma," said Ellen, "please go to your room, and whatever happens don't let them see you give way; let us prove worthy of our dear cause."

Mrs. Randolph tottered down the hall, and Ellen heard her crying out as she went: "God help me! God help her!"

Ellen opened the door. Their fears were not groundless, as Purdy stood in the entrance, with a soldier behind him, bearing a gun over his shoulder.

"Well," said Purdy, by way of greeting, "how long will it take you to get ready to go to Dixie?"

"A very short time," said Ellen, as composedly as if he had proposed a walk down the street to her.

"I have only half an hour to give you," said the man, whose prime object evidently was to make her *beg*.

She saw through his intentions instantly, and determined that if she must die, she would "die game."

"I don't ask any more," said she.

Purdy was evidently disconcerted. He felt sure when it came to the point she would succumb, and he might possibly claim the merit of saving her from the punishment; but he did not know the material he had to deal with. He did not give up, however. Stepping past her into the hall, he said:

"Does your mother know this?"

"Of course not," said Ellen, a chill passing over her at the thought of her mother; "but I can tell her."

Mrs. Randolph's room was at the end of the hall, and hearing distinctly this conversation through the half-open door, she now made her appearance, and before Ellen could reach her she sank almost unconscious on the floor. Kneeling beside her and putting her arms around her, Ellen said:

"Mamma, dear Mamma! try and bear it. What would Aunt Annie tell us if she was here? Wouldn't she say that our Father in heaven had sent this trial for some good end? 'We are persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.'"

Mrs. Randolph was incapable of speaking, though she heard all her daughter had said.

Purdy had followed Ellen, and now at the sound of his voice she looked up, and found his hateful face over them. This was his last chance.

"I tell you what you do," he said: "you sit down and write a letter to General Milroy, asking him to let you stay, and I will guarantee that he will receive it and let you stay."

"And I tell you what," said Ellen, the white heat of her rage speaking in her voice through her closed teeth, "I would not do it to save his life and yours this moment: I have done nothing wrong, and of course have no apology to make."

"But," said the man," you see the condition in which your mother is. Surely you will not leave her this a-way."

Then life and courage came back to the poor broken woman. She vindicated her sex in her weakness. For

the first time probably in her life her character asserted itself and stood alone. Rising, almost without assistance, she said with firmness and dignity:

"Apologise to General Milroy! No, sir, not with my consent. I would rather die in parting with her than see her humiliated."

Purdy had no more arrows in reserve; his quiver was empty. These two Virginia women were invulnerable. So, shrugging his shoulders, he said:

"I would have helped you if you had let me. This man," pointing to the guard with the gun, "must see you pack your trunk; and be sure, sir," to the man, "that nothing contraband goes into them. I will be back in half an hour with the ambulance," and he walked out of the house.

By this time the news had spread, and the hall was already full of sympathising, grieved, and angry women. None but those who have witnessed such scenes can ever know the desperate helplessness of a community under the circumstances. That man's home is his castle is a feeling indigenous in the heart of every man. It may be that the great fountain-head of English jurisprudence, Sir Edward Coke, planted the seed of it when he said as early as 1580:

"The house of every one is to him as his castle and fortress, as well for his defence against injury and violence as for his repose."

Or Pitt, who in 1783, in his spirit-stirring notes announced:

"The poorest man may in his cottage bid defiance to all the force of the Crown. It may be frail; its roof may shake; the wind may blow through it; the storms may enter,—but the King of England cannot

enter. All his forces dare not cross the threshold of the ruined tenement."

Or it may be it is only old Nature in the heart of every one of her children asserting the sacredness and strength of home by the deep feeling of resentment at the wrong of its invasion.

But General Milroy laughed Coke, Pitt, and Nature to the winds, snapped his fingers in derision at the puny strength of the King of England and his forces, and crossed the threshold defended only by women, with his own unaided arm. But even he, in the person of these his vicegerents, could not help a feeling of shrinking almost akin to fear at the outraged indignation which burned in the faces of these weak children of Nature at the violation of her kind laws, by which she extends the arms of her protection around the frail and defenceless. The recognition of the fact that a body of armed men could thus enter a private house and take away a lady from its sacred protection was heartrending. Woman-like, no two individuals of the assembled crowd took it quite in the same way. Helen May, a gentle, fair girl, sat with her face hidden in her hands, sobbing as if her heart would break, while Julia Bell stood beside Ellen, helping her to pack her trunks, and at the same time using her tongue vigorously.

The Yankee soldier meanwhile looked on; nor was he the least to be pitied of the party. He seemed to be a decent man, and his situation, thus forced to superintend the sacred mysteries of a young lady's wardrobe, was anything but pleasant to him, particularly when for want of a better they made him the scapegoat for the whole sins of the Government.

"Indeed, ladies," he said, as he wiped the drops from

his face, "I can't help it; it's a miserable, dirty business for any man to have to do."

"You can't touch pitch without being soiled," said Julia Bell. "You can't stay in Milroy's army without being called on to do dirty work."

"Hush, Julia," said Ellen, "let me do the talking. They are doing the worst they can to me, and my tongue is loosed; but they may exile you too if you give them a chance. Just whisper any feeling you wish expressed to me, and I will say it; and glad am I of it, too, as I may never have another chance. Here, sir," to the man, "you are not watching; I shall report your unfaithfulness to Captain Purdy. I have put in one or two articles of clothing which you have not seen."

"Indeed, ladies, I can't help it," reiterated the man, manipulating his face with his red cotton pocket-handkerchief again.

"Let him alone, Ellen," said Mrs. Randolph, the milk of her human kindness drawn out by his evident suffering; "the poor man is obliged to obey orders; he can't help it."

"He volunteered to do it," said Julia Bell pitilessly; "he likes it. Did you ever see keener enjoyment?" and they all laughed bitterly at the poor man's face of utter misery.

Ellen was down on her knees before her trunk, packing it as rapidly as she could, while every one else assisted her, when a step in the passage was quickly followed by the appearance of the redoubtable Purdy, swaggering in with his hat on his head, his hands in his pockets, with the self-importance of a "monarch of all he surveyed." It was the first time in his life that he had ever commanded, or even per-

haps glanced into the circles of ladies and gentlemen, and he made the best of his opportunities.

"Waal, we're ready," he said.

"I am not," said Ellen emphatically, turning her flaming face upon him, which in every lineament dared him to the conflict.

"Waal, you must go," said Purdy.

"The half hour is not out yet," said Ellen, glancing at the clock on the mantel.

"I can't help it; my time is precious," said the man.

"Mine is equally so," said Ellen coolly.

"Waal, you *must* go."

The tone in which this order was given supplied the rose-leaf which overflowed the cup. Rising to her feet, her eyes fairly flashing with anger, and speaking in that peculiar low tone, with a quiver and a clearness in it, which always in a woman denotes a fearful state of nervous excitement, she answered him:

"Captain Purdy, it is time we understood each other more clearly. I need no key to read you; it is done fully. You are less quick, or it may be I am less readable, but I tell you now: You came here to take me from my home (which you have no right under the sun to do), but with a brute force to enforce your will, which, weak woman that I am, I am obliged to obey. You *graciously* allowed me half an hour to get ready—not a very long time for a lady to make preparations to leave home for an indefinite period—and before the allotted time is out, you order me to leave. Now, sir, I tell you I *will not*, until I am ready. I don't care if the half hour *is* out, you can sit down and wait my convenience."

Purdy muttered something like "She-devil" under

his breath, but he did not attempt to hurry her again. Seating himself on the other side of the trunk, with a vulgar curiosity which the other man had been far from displaying, he watched the operation of packing, officiously offering his services to assist every now and then, which Ellen invariably and indignantly declined.

The scene, albeit it had its comic side too, was painful from the intense bitterness it had awakened in the breasts of these women, destroying at a blow the softness of nature which is their greatest charm. Even these rough men shrank from the spectacle almost appalled. It was the turning of the worm when trodden upon, the outraged nature asserting itself against its oppressors. There they were with their inflamed cheeks, flashing eyes and cutting tongues, a terrible picture of womanhood transformed by oppression and wrong.

"I suppose," said Ellen, holding up a Bible before Purdy, "that I may take this with me, or is the Word of God considered contraband of war?"

The man answered sulkily that she could take it but he didn't see it had done her much good.

"No, God forgive me! I believe Satan reigns in my heart to-day," said the girl, with a sudden revulsion of feeling which brought a refreshing dew into her hard dry eyes; only for a second though, the fire was burning too hotly to be quenched by such inconsiderable heart-showers.

"Let me put down the trunk for you," said Purdy, stepping forward with a repulsive smile.

"No," she said, with an irrepressible shudder, "don't touch anything belonging to me. Julia, come and help me."

Purdy drew back with a wicked laugh as the two girls, one mounted on the trunk and the other tugging at the lock, with trembling fingers succeeded in fastening it at last.

"And now I am ready," said Ellen. "Mamma! Mamma! please don't make me cry," she whispered, as her mother threw her arms about her; "it would be such a gratification to that man to see one even of my tears, and he never shall! The girls have promised to take care of you and keep you from missing me, and when our men come in I will be with them, and Papa and myself will take you back to Richmond. Good-bye, girls! take care of Mamma. Oh, Julia, remember I leave her to you all as a sacred charge."

Every woman in the crowd except Ellen was weeping now; some sobbing out cheerful words and mingling laughter and tears in sad confusion; all bidding her be brave and not forget that she merely suffered in the cause in which they all had a part. The last embrace was given, and the poor exile started towards the ambulance which stood there waiting for her.

"Ellen! Ellen!" cried out Julia Bell, as, with her face turned the other way, Ellen was crossing the pavement towards the vehicle, "please don't let those men touch you."

Ellen turned and found three or four of the men had followed her, and were about to put her up the high step of the ambulance.

"Stand back, gentlemen," she said defiantly, "I don't need your help," and she got in without any assistance. Her trunks were put in after her, and three men took their places also; and so with no earthly protection but her own brave heart, she started. The last sound her

friends heard from her, was: "Good-bye, Mamma; don't grieve, God will take care of me. Good-bye, girls; take care of Mamma, and all of you pray for the exile," and she was gone.

Some of the girls followed her at a distance, saw the ambulance stop for a few moments at the Provost Marshal's office, where it was surrounded by a cavalry guard numbering about twenty-five men, all fully armed and equipped, and then on! A formidable array to bear from her home a helpless, innocent woman.

Woman-nature in some of its aspects is a strange study, and one of its rarest phases was presented in the person of the young lady who sat thus helpless and alone in the vehicle which was conveying her beyond the reach of her home. In ordinary times the mere mental picture of such a situation, in the hands and at the disposal of armed enemies whom she had defied and angered, must have thrown her woman's heart into spasms of terror; but that heart had thrown aside its gentler elements and doffed an armor which defied womanly fear. Had she permitted herself to relax so far as to enter into an analysis of her feelings, she would have been amazed at herself, as she felt no more emotion of terror than if she had been seated in her own peaceful home in times of peace and prosperity.

The curtains of the ambulance were fastened down tightly, and she could only see out of the front opening; but after they had progressed nearly to the end of town, she heard a clanking and commotion around her vehicle which excited her wonder. Turning around she forcibly opened one of the leathern curtains, and to her surprise saw herself surrounded by an armed force of cavalrymen. Instead of being fright-

ened, the utter ludicrousness of the whole thing struck her, and the reaction upon her wrought-up feelings brought a laugh, genuine and full of amusement. The three men in the ambulance at the unexpected sound turned towards her, with their surprise fully written out upon their faces, and Purdy asked:

"Wat's the matter now?"

"I only want to know," said Ellen, controlling herself with an effort, and speaking with what seriousness she could command, "how many men it takes to guard one poor, helpless Southern woman, who has no arms but those God gave her."

It was an uncomplimentary view to take of the matter, and Purdy turned sulkily away.

"Tell me," said Ellen, determined to pursue the subject, "how many men are in the cavalry guard. I want to tell it when I go to Dixie. They don't know of what importance we ladies are down here, nor what pains General Milroy takes to escort them with honor."

"There's twenty-five men," said one of the other men, a good-natured, honest-looking fellow, who drove the vehicle and seemed infinitely to enjoy Purdy's sullen mood.

"Twenty-five outside and three in," said Ellen, laughing afresh; "an unnecessary expenditure of force, it seems to me. Well, I shall not attempt an escape under the circumstances."

"How far do you propose taking me?" she asked after some time.

"Not within reach of the Rebels," said Purdy.

"I suppose not," answered Ellen. "But I have some friends near Newtown, and if you will leave me with them I shall be obliged to you."

"Our orders are," said Purdy, "to leave you at the side of the road in the open country."

"At the roadside in the open country without protection!" repeated Ellen emphatically.

"Them's they," said Purdy. "En' that's what you git fur bein' sich a Rebel."

"Do you think that this is a time for me to regret that I am not linked in any way with you, sir," said Ellen defiantly.

The young man who drove the ambulance laughed unreservedly, and was joined feebly by the second, who occupied the back seat, while Purdy relapsed into a sulky silence until he came upon an old negro driving a miserable cart towards him, when he stopped and asked:

"Have their ben any Rebels down this way lately?"

"No, marster, ain't seen none, 'cepin' it mought be Mars John; he wer' down home las' week."

"Who is he? where is he?" asked Purdy excitedly.

"He blonks to Mars. Turner Ashby's calvary, and I heard him tell Miss Sally when he lef' her dit he wouldn't be long afore he cum back. I was jis' gwine up to tell de Gineral at Winchester."

"Well, go on quick and tell him just whar you live," said Purdy; "this are important and must be seen to."

"That I suppose is a fair specimen of the 'intelligent contraband'?" said Ellen, sarcastically, as they rode on.

"Yes, he's a good speciment of that highly useful class of citizens," said Purdy. "They gives us a mighty heap of valable infurmation, they does. I knows jist how to deal with 'em, I dus, bein' a Southern man myself."

"You!" exclaimed Ellen indignantly.

"Yes, ma'am, me. I was born and fotch up in old Virginny; en' ef thar wasn't so meny darned Rebels in the State I wouldn't be so 'shamed of it."

"You ashamed of Virginia!" said Ellen, "when she is blushing painfully over such degenerate sons."

"She's done disgraced herself, en' that's a fact; but we'll lick her into shape before we's done," said the man, sullenly.

Ellen's eyes flashed indignantly, but before she could answer the ambulance stopped, and the work of unloading commenced. In a few moments the young girl found herself standing alone beside her trunks, with her whilom escort disappearing in the distance.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth."—JAMES iii. 5.

A CONFEDERATE candle! The exclamation conveys nothing to many of my readers, but I see a smile, half tender, half sad, break upon the lips of some of my Southern sisters, as the recollection of the cunning device to supply the lack of the brighter luminaries of the past comes back to their memory. Ah, after all there was a pleasure in those old straits! — ingenious contrivances to cheat adversity. A scene occurs to me now: a pretty green lawn dotted over with the sweetest flowers which Nature furnishes, a bevy of fair laughing girls all intent upon the manufacture of a Confederate candle six hundred feet long. I can see the surprise of the unitiated at the announcement, which savors of the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments," and makes "Baron Munchausen" wink. But it was even so: all intent upon the manufacture of a Confederate candle six hundred feet long. I see the small furnace with its glowing coals placed upon the gravel walk, and going nearer I peep into the sauce-pan seated upon it, and laugh to mark the self-important bubbling and sputtering which the rosin and wax are making, due doubtless to the burning consciousness which possesses them that their mission is henceforth to illuminate the world, or at least a part of it. I now see the monster ball of candle-wick unrolled, and hear the musical laughter of the young girls as each takes her place along the lawn,

ready to do her part in the business. The wick is immersed in the liquid and quickly passed from one to the other of the fair assistants; and even in this slight matter does the individual character of these "women" peep out. Here grave Katherine, whose stand is next the sauce-pan, receives the hot string in her fingers with no perceptible wince, even though their reddened tips show that at least the "smell of fire has passed on them;" while Lizzie, twenty yards off, screams and drops it, and wonders how the others have stood it, stops the business to caress her wounded hands, and at last rules herself out of the line because "it hurts." One woman will go to the stake in the cause of duty and right, while another shrinks and turns aside from even a fancied inconvenience, and these two types of the sex pervade the world. There is a wonderful uniformity in Nature wherever we find her.

Three times is the process repeated of dipping the wick, until at last the irregular string is transformed into a long yellow rope, smooth and round, and the young laborers lay down their finished work upon the green with a pleased consciousness that of all the Confederate candles that have ever been made this is the queen. Next comes the process of wrapping up. A simple wooden stand is brought, covered with blue paper, and the long rope is wrapped fantastically about it. First around and around, then up and down, until it looks like a great yellow hogshead built in the Gothic style, while the long end of the rope rears itself upward, ready to shed its taper light and consume itself upon the altar of duty.

In the library at Rose Hill Mrs. Holcombe and Margaret are busily sewing, each by the light of a Confede-

rate candle, while Mary with a third is seated at the piano, turning over the leaves of a music-book, and her memory at the same time, as she carelessly runs her fingers over the keys, bringing out some tune of old familiarity which evokes from the past scenes of light and love sadly in contrast with the present.

And yet the simple home-scene is so peaceful in its features as to shut out the sound of the dogs of war, as they snap and snarl and growl and bark upon the very threshold —

> "Come, stack arms, men, pile up the rails,
> And stir the camp-fires bright."

"Ah, Margie, don't you remember, as if it were yesterday, how we all sang that together last summer— Papa, Brother, Johnny, Mr. Hautman and Mr. Williams? I wonder if those times will ever come again? I can hear Mr. Hautman now: 'Come, stock aumps, men, pile up de rail!' Heigh ho! it would do me good to hear him again sing, with so much spirit, 'Dat's Stonewall Jockson's way!'"

"Look forward, don't look backward, daughter," said Mrs. Holcombe.

"Can't do it, Mamma: nothing to look forward to except trouble, trouble. Oh well! I shan't grumble any more," and as if to give a seal to her determination her clear voice broke out with:

> "Hurrah! hurrah! for Southern rights, hurrah!
> Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag which bears a single star!"

Margie's rich alto joined in, and the old room rang with the glad notes of the song, which from the standpoint of our dead hopes is so touchingly sad.

A hurried step in the passage, and Mammy's frightened face at the door interrupted them.

"Good Marster, my childen! you settin' down here singin' en' de solgers all round de house! De Lord huv mussy on us! Dey say dey is got orders to bun de house down."

Great terror in its first stage is voiceless, so the silence which for a moment fell upon these three women brought standing to their feet in that doomed house by their surprise, was as perfect as the grave. Then turning their eyes upon each other, and seeing as in a glass the horror of their own faces depicted there, a wail of despair filled the room. Falling on her knees in the midst, with streaming eyes and hands uplifted to heaven, Mrs. Holcombe cried:

"Mercy, oh God! mercy for thine afflicted children! We have trusted in Thee, we have none but Thee: save us, oh save us!"

But already heavy steps sound along the hall, and soldiers stand awe-struck upon the threshold, looking in upon the scene.

"You will not, you cannot do this dreadful thing!" shrieked Mary, casting herself at their very feet. "Think of your own homes, of your wives and children."

More than one man who had been foremost of the party, fell back and slunk out at the open door before the vision of this spirit-torn child of earth pleading for her home; others pressed forward and saw her grovelling upon the floor, tearing her ruddy, sparkling, glad hair — saw the kneeling figure pleading with God, and saw a tall woman standing in the midst, like an avenging spirit, with pale cheeks and flaming eyes, and the

three Confederate candles doing their feeble best to throw a light upon it worthy of the scene. The men stood awe-struck and irresolute. At last one in the uniform of a Lieutenant, pressing forward and taking off his cap, real concern in his face, handed to Margaret a note as he said:

"Ladies, I would willingly face a battery of cannon rather than obey that order, but I am a subordinate officer and have no option in the matter."

Margaret opened the note mechanically and read:

"HEADQUARTERS OF THE ——.

"*Captain J. H. Brown:*

"Your information with regard to the house named Rose Hill has been received. And whereas it appears from your statement that it is used as a harbor for Rebels, it has incurred the penalty proclaimed against such harbors; therefore I order you to take such force as may be necessary and burn it to the ground, with all of its furniture and valuables, not allowing anything to be taken therefrom except such clothing as may be upon the persons of the inmates.

"DAVID HUNTER, *Commanding General.*"

Margaret Murray was only a woman, though a brave-hearted one, and when she read this doom of her father's home, and knew that the blow came through her, for one instant utter dismay took possession of her. The fault of her early youth seemed to pursue her grimly, relentlessly, and for one moment forgetting husband, child, and her bright hopes of happiness, she wished that she could lay her young head beneath the quiet sod. For one moment only though; the next she was herself almost, and though the effort to speak

was twice made before trembling lip and voice seconded the effort, it came at last:

"Will nothing save us from this calamity?"

"I am forced to say 'nothing,' my poor ladies. The order has been issued that in one hour's time the building shall be fired. Let me urge you to make as much haste as possible."

One hour's time to take leave of the associations of a life-time! One hour's time to blot out the dear traces of dead and gone! One hour's time to consign to a fiery grave all the sweet usages of home! One hour's time, and with no roof to shelter and no home to protect: the helpless women and children must go out into the pitiless storm of life, exiles and outcasts! It was short enough; but better so — a longer time would but have been a longer anguish. Now the absolute necessity for acting and thinking promptly, brought reaction from the torpor of distress into which the announcement had plunged them. Already the mothers think of their children, and flying to their rooms, snatch them from their quiet slumbers and prepare them for the flitting.

A shade of additional anxiety crossed Margaret's face as she prepared her little boy for the move, taking care even in her agitation not to waken him. He had been sick for a day or two with a cold, and no wonder even now in this terrible trouble she found time for solicitude lest the cool air of night should add to it. She wrapped him up as well as she could, however, and handed him with many injunctions to his nurse, a young girl of about twelve years of age, his old nurse having long since gone to the land of freedom.

The work of devastation had already commenced

when she left her room. Dark figures, looking weird and ghastly by the light of flickering torches, flitted about the different rooms. In the hands of some she saw some little household valuables, but she heeded them not, for there was Mary in the distance making her way alone through the crowd of soldiers with a bundle in her arms. With a protective instinct for this fair girl her sister started forward to join her. Before she reached her, however, a man roughly caught the bundle from her.

"Aginst orders, young ooman," he said.

"Oh, let me have it! let me have it!" cried Mary, so piteously that the man hesitated and unrolled it before he spoke.

"Doll-babies!" he said, with an accent of amused contempt. "Look yere, Bill, this gal is leaving ever thing else behint and takin' out her doll-babies," and he threw them to her with a laugh half of pity and half of amusement.

For the first time the tears filled Margaret Murray's eyes as she heard coming out of the shadowy past a failing voice, saying:

"Mamie, take care of my family; don't let 'em all get broke up."

As she left the house she turned for a last look, and found the men with the torches gathering the furniture together in the middle of the drawing-room floor; the lace-curtains were torn down from the windows and thrown upon the pile, music-books and rich ornaments added to it.

"Here, put on this yere matting; 'twill burn quickest," said one man, bringing in a pile of summer matting which lay ready to be put down in a corner.

"No fear of it's not burning quick enough," said another, pouring something from a bottle over the pile; "it'll go like a tinder-box when it once gets started. I kinder can't help feelin' sorry for the women, though they is Rebels."

"Hush, there's one of them now," said his companion, directing his attention to Margaret, who still stood in the door.

"We is ready, ma'am," said the man, lifting his cap to her. "Don't like to hurry you, but our orders is positive."

"One moment," she pleaded, as she dashed back into the house and looked up into the face of her dead mother's picture, which hung against the wall, smiling down at her. "Can I not take this?"

"No, ma'am; pictures was specially named. Why, law, ma'am! it ain't livin' nohow. You is got ever thing livin', and that's a great 'lowance."

She turned away, and looked back no more until she joined the rest of the family on the lawn below the house.

Jean sat on the ground with her face hidden in Eddy's dress as he lay upon her lap, and one hand passing caressingly over Mary's head as she lay beside her. No word was spoken as Margaret joined them, and silently she stood beside them, her gaze riveted upon the devoted building smiling so calmly in the moonlight. In another minute a light seemed to leap up within the house, and the figures of men hurrying before a cloud of black smoke issued from the door; and she stood calmly by, looking her last upon the home of her childhood. As the crackling of the flames and the burning smell reached them, Mrs. Holcombe half raised her head, then buried it with a groan, and Mary shrieked aloud:

"Ah, how can they do it? God will punish them."

But Margaret said not a word; she seemed to herself turned to stone, so inadequately did her suffering compare with the call upon her feeling. It is ever thus in times of a terrible tempest of thought, feeling seems dead, like the body, which is only conscious of suffering up to a certain point.

Ah, the remorseless fury of that terrible fire! ripping up and tearing down the most sacred usages and sweetest endearments of that old Virginia home, lolling its terrible forked tongues in horrid derision from the windows and doors, crackling and roaring with fearful laughter over the ruin and misery it was making; its flames with cruel delight now winding themselves like illuminated serpents up the large pillars of the porch, tearing down and trampling to ashes the green vines which had but newly clothed themselves in the soft verdure of spring; now leaping upward towards the heavens, their lurid light making the sky itself seem dark by the contrast, then casting its glare upon the surrounding scene, exaggerating everything with its wild brilliancy. Hard, rugged faces looked demoniacal in its light, while to the weeping agony of the homeless women it added a thrilling beauty.

Margaret Murray, as she stood, looked like an old painting of Rubens, whose flesh-tints are brighter than nature. She might have stood as a model for an accusing angel or a Nemesis.

Not a word had she spoken since the first volume of smoke, telling its tale, had sent a shudder and a shiver through her frame; but with eyes fixed upon the burning building, as if she feared to lose one moment in

which she might look her last upon the dear old place. Every now and then her hungry gaze would be rewarded as the fire made wide gaps in the walls; and the breeze which blew freshly, waving aside the sheets of flame, her eye would catch sight of some object familiar from childhood, which seemed to her excited imagination to be waving a farewell to her. There was the dear old library, her favorite resort, almost untouched still amid the general ruin; so familiar was she with every spot about it that she felt as if, taking knowledge for sight, she could read the names of the books upon the shelves. There was the piano, and, as if in mockery, the last sound she had heard in connection with it again rung upon her ears:

"Hurrah, hurrah! for Southern rights, hurrah!"

Where were they now? while she, one of the daughters of Virginia, stood here before the ruin of her home without a shelter for her head!

Ah, how like lightning did the familiar scenes of her life connect themselves with her last sight of that dear old room; recalling her wayward childhood and youth, and so much of patience and love which had guarded and guided her through all. Now her father stood beside her, then her lover, husband, friend; and like a demon, the man who was the evil genius of her life flitted in and out of the scenes. Mingled with all her horrible sense of the present was bright laughter, gay words, all going down! down! down! blackening, scorching, shriveling in the hands of this ruthless monster; and there—and there—and there—were spots sacred to the dead and gone, where earth-born spirits had torn themselves away from earth-born love and winged their flight heavenward!

But, ah! now a gap is made; the curtain of light is again drawn aside, and peering anxiously in, she sees her mother's picture, brilliant, sparkling, and smiling upon her. The dreadful incongruity of its expression, with its surroundings, sent a shudder through her, though she never took her hungry eyes from it for an instant.

Now she leans forward anxiously, eagerly. Is it the light shining upon the gilt frame? No, it is the flame writhing itself around it, and there from the midst of the burning fiery furnace the face smiles upon her still; a moment more, there is a shrinking and a shivering of the figure, a dark shadow passes over it — it shrivels — curls up — and all is over. The last view she has is the smiling face, smiling out at her. For the first time during the fearful scene she buried her face in her hands and groaned aloud; nor did she arouse until a loud booming sound announced the falling in of the roof upon the ruins of the home it had so long sheltered, and she raised her head to see black clouds of funereal smoke spreading like a pall over all, while thick showers of sparks ascended to the sky in angry volumes, and the wind bore off on its wings flakes of fire.

She was startled from her miserable reverie by feeling something tugging at her dress, and she heard a little voice crying, as he pointed to the fire, "Mamma, so pretty!"

She looked down and found her little boy standing beside her. He had been forgotten in the general commotion, his nurse having laid him, all wrapped up as he was, under a tree, while she, in the face of the general ruin, took her final leave of the family. The child waking and finding himself alone, had managed to ex-

tricate himself from his encumbrances, and made his way to his mother's side unnoticed. He was dressed only in his little white gown and his feet bare. Instantly the mother usurped her place in the heart of the distressed woman, and catching him up in her arms with an accent of alarm, she hugged his little shivering form to her breast, and then fled with him in the direction of Mammy's house.

CHAPTER XXV.

"As a star at the quiet hour of even
Peeps trembling from the pure azure of heaven,
E'er the darkening shades of night have come,
Then vanishes back to its native home:
So the soul in this rosy shell impearled
Had gazed for a moment upon the dark world,
But shrank from its cankering care and pain,
And calmly returned to heaven again.—St. G. Tucker, Jr.

So absorbing was the distress of Mrs. Holcombe and Mary that Margaret's absence was not noticed. The fire in the meantime had destroyed everything it could destroy, and now flickered up from the ruin with a smouldering sullen determination to live on without food, since everything consumable was gone; then a gentle hand was laid on Mrs. Holcombe's shoulder, and Mammy's voice sounded in her ear:

"My dear Misstis, come 'long of me; dey ain't no better place den my house for you honored head dis night. Come, my poor childern. I'se afeard de trouble ain't over yet. Miss Marget's chile is got de croup, en' she want you bad."

This last information aroused them at once, and they hurried off to the quarters.

They found her seated before the fire with a little writhing, struggling figure upon her knees, his cheeks burning and his eyes flashing with fever, while the breath came in hoarse gasps between his lips.

"Oh, Margie!" cried Mrs. Holcombe, throwing herself on her knees beside her.

"No need to be frightened, Mamma," was the answer, not without a note of angry expostulation in her tone; "he is better now than a few moments ago. There, darling, spit out the phlegm. Oh, my baby, my baby! God surely could not be so cruel! No, no! Papa is praying for us now."

But disguise it, blind herself to it as she would, others saw the fearful struggle the baby made for life with death. Everything was done, but still his breathing became more labored, the blood mounting higher and higher in his cheeks as the struggle increased. At last a black rim settled around his mouth and eyes. Mammy saw it, and silently pointed it out to Mrs. Holcombe.

"Let me take him, Miss Marget," pleaded the old woman, "en' you go en' lie down."

"No! no! no! No one shall touch him but myself, my baby, my baby! Mammy, try something else."

It was useless, still it was done; but the labored breathing increased.

"Ah, Mammy," pleaded the young mother, "see how he looks to me for help, reaching out his dear arms. Can't something be done?"

"Nothin', my chile, but to put him in de arm ob Jesus," said the old woman; and even as she spoke the breath seemed suddenly to lighten, the eyes closed, and kind angels bore away the baby's spirit to the arms of the Saviour!

The morning after the burning of Rose Hill the sun rose heartlessly upon the scene of devastation and ruin with the greatest brilliancy of which it was capable, and Captain Brown rose with it, elate at his last stroke of vengeance. Looking from his quarters

towards the place, the cloud of smoke which still blackened the sky came to him as an assurance that his work was complete, and he gloated over the certainty, and from this gloating grew a desire to witness the full effect of his triumph. It was but half a victory unless he could see the haughty woman humbled. At first he would rather have avoided an interview, but the desire to witness her humiliation overcame any fear he might have had, and ended in a determination to seek her out and witness for himself the fall of the proud spirit which had so long defied him.

It was still early morning when he mounted his horse and rode to the ruins. He was human, and felt it in some pang of regret as he stood beside what was yesterday so inviting a picture of a country home, now ruthlessly destroyed by his act. A little thought of retributive justice entered his soul, but he put it away. A man who is just from an act of vigorous service to the Devil does not much relish the thought of a God. He convinces himself that there is no such uncomfortable institution, and binds himself with new chains to *his* master.

Finding from inquiry that the ladies had taken refuge at the negro-quarters, he turned his horse's head in that direction, with a sneering smile of triumph over their fall. Arriving at the door of Mammy's house he dismounted, and tying his horse, opened the door without ceremony. Here he found what he sought, and how? Mrs. Holcombe was seated in the middle of the room, with her little boy on her lap, and Mary stood at the back of her chair, her arms resting lightly around her. Their attitudes were expressive of the deepest dejection, and their eyes were heavy

with weeping and loss of rest. Upon the bed which stood in one corner of the room lay the figure of a woman, and by its side sat old Mammy, with many a new wrinkle in her aged face since the setting of that sun which now poured its beams through the little uncurtained window and flickered upon the bare floor.

There was an ominous stillness in the room which somehow awed the intruder without his knowing why, perhaps because he expected more demonstrative grief. Mrs. Holcombe and Mary caught sight of him first, and shuddering, turned away. Little Eddy, feeling the movement, looked up, and shrieked in a paroxysm of nervous frenzy for the "bad Yankee" to be taken away. Mammy rose and came towards him with ashy face, and the figure upon the bed lifted itself up and disclosed to his view Margaret Murray, but Margaret Murray so changed, so shorn of her beauty, so terrible in the change that, bad man as he was, his heart quailed before her. It was a triumph, but a triumph which punished the victor by the mere sight of it.

Seeing him standing there, she rose to her feet, looking in the majesty of her grief taller than he had ever seen her before, and with a smile more bitter than a curse said:

"So you come, Sir, to see the result of your work?"

He had come for that, and he knew it; but could he have been spared the sight now, he would have blessed the hand which effected the salvation.

"I — I came to see if I could be of any service to you, ladies," said he, gathering boldness as he went on.

"Service!" she said, and the hollow despair of her voice threw a volume of meaning into the one word. "Did you call by at the blackened ruin of what but

for your *service* would have been Rose Hill this morning? and have you come on here to see your completed work?"

"Mrs. Murray," he said, trying hard to catch his flying manhood, "a subordinate officer but obeys his superiors. I am not accountable in any way for the sad circumstances which deprived you of your home."

She may not have heard him; she certainly took no heed of his words, but moving aside she repeated:

"You come here to see your completed work; it waits your approval," and as she spoke she drew aside a white cover and disclosed to his view the waxen form of the dead baby.

Death had stricken so suddenly home that he had not robbed his victim of one grace; he had but stopped the breathing, and that was all. He lay with parted lips, as if he but waited his Maker's breath to revivify his form. The little dimpled hands were crossed the one on the other, and old Mammy had managed to find a bunch of lilies of the valley, which were placed between them. He was dressed only in a white night-gown, as nothing more suitable had been saved from the fire.

The man who had seen hundreds of dead men on a battle-field without shrinking, who had not hesitated in pursuit of his own paltry revenge to commit the fearful act of the night before, felt a spasm of horror at his heart when he saw this exquisite casket from which the soul had fled thus suddenly through his instrumentality. On the impulse of the moment he sprang forward to the side of the bed, and exclaimed:

"My work? Oh, no! I never meant this!"

"Yes, yours," she answered, without any violence of

manner, but more as if an angelic sorrow filled her heart for the poor sinful man. "Do you indeed regret it? then I pity you. To be capable of feeling sorrow for such deeds as yours must be a foretaste of eternal punishment. Yes, I pity you!"

The nature of the man, however, began again to assert itself even here. He had laid down too definite a programme to be turned from his course for any length of time.

"You have no right, madam," he said, "to make me accountable for your misfortunes; 'you have sown the wind, you must reap the whirlwind.' You only endure the fortunes of war, and though this may not be a proper time to say it, it is but the punishment meted out to you in good measure for your pride. All this you might have escaped—"

She understood him, and turned half-wearily towards the bed, then back to him, and in a low, reverent voice said:

"I almost thank you for your cruel allusion to the past. I have felt since last night that God was no God, or that He would not so have forsaken us; but looking back to that reckless time of my life, looking at you, I feel that I have a Father who protected me from myself and from you, and although"—and her voice trembled—"I am sorely afflicted, all of His waves and His billows have gone over me, yet I know now that He sees what is best, that in mercy, not in wrath, He has laid His hands upon me. But, oh, my baby! my darling! it is hard to give you up!" All her strength was gone now, and she was down beside the bed, her face buried in the baby's pillow, shedding the first tears which had bedewed her eyes since the death of the child.

Captain Brown was not sorry to be hurried out of the room, and the last sound which fell upon his ears as he left the house was that broken-hearted wail.

That afternoon a sad procession moved along the path leading to the family burying-ground. In front old Uncle Bob bore a rough pine-box; next came the mother with bowed head, supported, one on each side, by her mother and sister; and behind, old Mammy and Aunt Ailsie, with Eddy between them.

It was an humble funeral, but no prince ever had more heartfelt mourners. Arriving at the grave, the faithful old negroes placed the little coffin in it and filled it up, while the three mourners knelt at its brink. When it was done, the voice of Mrs. Holcombe rose like a broken harp-string, low, tremulous, and sweet, in earnest and humble entreaty for the blessing of God upon them in their desolation and distress, and that His strengthening grace would enable the absent parent of the dead baby to say from his heart:

"It is well with the child."

CHAPTER XXVI.

"O Liberty! Liberty! how many crimes are committed in thy name."
—MADAME ROLAND.

WHEN Ellen Randolph looked down the road in the direction of Winchester at the rapidly disappearing cavalcade which had acted as her escort, and then back again in the opposite direction at the desolate country, it must be confessed that her woman's heart quailed a little; but gathering courage on the instant from the very absence of danger, as well as of relief, she walked on to the next house, which she knew well as the house of kind friends.

"Why, Ellen Randolph! where on the earth did you come from?" said a lady, running from the house to meet her, followed by a young girl.

Laughing and crying all in a breath, the young lady gave an account of herself and received a warm welcome, as they accompanied her into the house.

"And why not stay with us until our men come in?" said Agnes Irvine, a pretty rosebud of a girl, not yet over the threshold of womanhood, but nearing the boundary.

"Ah, if I only could!" said Ellen; "but I cannot remain so near the lines. I am like poor Joe in 'Bleak House,' I don't know where I am to go, but I must keep 'moving on' until I can find Papa, and consult with him about myself. I feel almost afraid to meet him too, on account of Mamma; I know he will be so worried. Ah, Agnes, my dear!" turning as she spoke to

the young girl, who knelt before her and held her hand, and speaking in half comic, half serious admonition, "take warning from my experience and never write a letter! See what it has brought me to."

"It has brought you to us," said Mrs. Irvine kindly; "we cannot be sorry for that."

"You are very kind," said Ellen, her eyes filling, "but I cannot blind myself to the truth that I have acted foolishly, and the result has been unfortunate, to Mamma at least."

"Oh well, never mind, it will all come right after a while," said the lady consolingly, while Agnes patted her hand with affectionate sympathy. "I don't believe it will be long before you can return home."

"In the meantime," said Ellen, "how am I to continue my journey?"

"How indeed?" said Mrs. Irvine; "our army is sixty miles up the Valley, and I do not suppose there are a dozen horses between this place and that."

"Mamma," said Agnes, "old Mr. Brown, our neighbor, has a horse and cart. I wonder if Miss Nell could not hire them?"

"That old thing!" said Mrs. Irvine, laughing; "I don't believe it would drag her ten miles."

"Then let it drag me five," said Ellen, "and I will get some other conveyance. We must not despise 'the day of small things.'"

It proved a fortunate suggestion of Agnes Irvine's, as Mr. Brown, upon being applied to, not only furnished the horse and cart, but refused most positively to take any money for its use.

"Far be it from me, young lady," said the old man, leaning on his stick and shaking his gray head with

earnest emphasis, "far be it from me to take a cent of money from a young lady who is put upon by these miserable scoundrels, who ain't ashamed to fight a petticoat. I can't fight, Ma'am, I'm too old for that; but I can lend you my horse and cart to take you as far as Woodstock on your journey, and I'll do it and welcome; and all the pay I wants is for you to hunt up my two boys what is in the 1st Virginia Regiment, and tell them if they wants their father's blessing to fight the Yankees all the harder for this deed they's done."

Nothing remained but to take the old man's offer, which Ellen did with many thanks, and the next morning saw her on her way, with Mrs. Irvine's little son as her driver.

The old horse, so contemptuously spoken of by Mrs. Irvine, proved better than his looks, or perhaps he was inspired by the knowledge of the service he was performing. Certain it is that he stepped out bravely, and carried Ellen the first stage of her journey, about twenty miles, accomplishing the feat in time to allow horse, cart, and boy to return to Newtown that night.

Again was Ellen left alone, standing on the low step leading into a long weather-boarded house, ostentatiously introduced as "The Hotel" by the sign-board which swung and creaked above her head. Nothing could be more utterly bare and desolate than the streets of Woodstock looked to the young girl as she stood gazing after the humble vehicle which had borne her so far on her journey. In its best days the town could not have been styled a pretty little village, and now, though there was a uniformity in the low weather-boarded houses, built close to the road, with only an occasional symptom of green grass obtruding itself upon

the sight, from the background it was a uniformity of dimness and dilapidation. A few ragged urchins played about the street, and one old man sat with his chair tilted back against the wall of what had once been a store, judging from the ambitious sign-board which still bore its place at the side of the door, announcing "Dry-goods, Corn, Potatoes, Shoes, Butter, Oats, Spices, Canned-fruit, Books, Confectionary, Stationery, and Fruits for sale here." But the empty windows and shelves, as seen through the open door, denied all of these facts in the most emphatic manner. So the old man had plenty of time to rest his feet in the air and wonder what the young lady standing on the hotel steps was crying for, and where she came from, and why those lazy rascals in the house didn't come out to see about her. He was just thinking of rousing them to an attention to their duties, and of gratifying his curiosity at the same time, when a portly old gentleman in linsey-woolsey pants and linen coat made his appearance.

"Won't you walk in, Miss?" said he, rousing her by the sound of his voice from the telegraph of thought she was sending down the road to her home.

"Can I go on from here up the Valley?" said Ellen, feeling an unconquerable aversion to entering the house.

"Well, it ain't no easy matter nowadays, Ma'am, to git about," said the man, a little disappointed at the thought of losing a customer so soon.

"Is there no vehicle I can hire to carry me even a few miles? I must go on, if possible, to-night," said Ellen, earnestly.

"Lord love you, Miss!" answered the man, "people have to walk nowadays. The soldiers don't leave much cattle behind 'em when they goes."

"You mean the Yankees take your horses," said Ellen, disposed to espouse the cause of the Confederacy on this its threshold.

"Both sides takes 'em, Miss; can't say I sees much difference in desire for horse flesh between the two."

"Oh well," said Ellen, woman-like, shifting her position to meet the difficulty, "of course our men have a right to them — indeed they are *obliged* to have them; but the Yankees have no right."

"Oh yes, yes, yes; I s'pose it's all right enough," said the man, by hurried acquiescence putting a period to any further discussion; "but walk in, Miss, and we will see if we can't make you comfortable," and he ushered her into a room which evidently held the rank of drawing-room in the establishment, though, like everything around, it bore the marks of the war in the faded and dingy atmosphere which pervaded it. The colors of the calico covering to the home-made lounge, which stretched itself, uninvitingly, opposite the door, had probably in an early stage of their existence delighted the eye of their successful artisan by their brilliancy and variety, but they were now, alas! bleared and dingy from long use, and the cover itself pleaded through occasional rents for the privilege of rest, to which its long and faithful servitude entitled it. The chairs were rather in keeping with the lounge, though there was a promise of comfort in the split-bottom rockers of which the hard and impenetrable lounge gave no hope. A rag-carpet adorned the floor, with the help here and there afforded by some remnant of better days in the shape of a three-ply scrap at the door and before the fire-place, about which it can only be said they were doing their best

to brighten the aspect of things. But the pride of the room was evidently a huge mahogany sofa, covered with black horse-hair, which wheezed with asthmatic indignation at every invasion of its magnificence, and bristled all over with broken springs, to the detriment of any ambitious aspirant to its throne. A centre-table sat between the windows, covered with the inevitable leather-back photographs, and some books, distinguished severally by the gilt titles, "*The Pearl*," "*The Gem*," "*Album*," &c. The walls were adorned with works of art in the shape of landscapes, where the excessive blue of the skies was only exceeded by the excessive blue of the water, and where grass of an impossible green luxuriated and afforded pasture for wooden cattle, of what peculiar species it defied the observer to decide; wooden men and women issued from houses smaller than themselves, and trees waved their rare foliage in the breeze.

Ellen Randolph's loneliness perfectly overcame her here, though she struggled bravely against the tears which would come in spite of her. When her host left her alone, to provide for her entertainment, she threw herself into a chair and sought a diversion in surrounding objects. It was at hand in the leather-backed photograph cases, and she was soon smiling amusedly over a rigid pair who had evidently just embarked upon the sea of matrimony, which they announced to all beholders by a stiff embrace. The next was an old grandmamma, with an uncompromising cap-border; next, a Confederate soldier in gray, and a young lady in blue, with innumerable streamers and a general airy appearance, as if she was out in a strong gale. Ellen was just making the acquaintance of this last, and

woman-like, forming a link between the original of it and the Confederate boy, when the original, without streamers, and consequently subdued, made her appearance at the door and announced that the young lady's room was ready for her reception.

"It is scarcely worth while," said Ellen, "for me to take a room, as I must leave at once."

"How?" asked the girl.

"That's the difficulty, I acknowledge," said Ellen, "and one I must try to overcome. Is there no one who has a horse I could hire to take me on to Mount Jackson?"

"Well, Pap he used to have a horse and carriage, but he ain't got none now," said the girl, showing a happy talent for retrospect, though scarce bringing it to bear successfully upon present emergencies; "and Tom, my brother,—his likeness is there," (alas! for Ellen's romance), "he's got a horse too, but he ain't here."

It was very satisfactory to the young lady doubtless to reflect that the family had been and were so well provided with means of locomotion, but Ellen could not quite see how it helped the present case.

"But is there no one in town," she said, "who would hire me a horse? Think if there is no horse about here I could get."

"Well now," said the former owner of the streamers, after contemplating the ceiling for some time, "Uncle Jack Slimons he did have two horses, but—"

"Of course he hasn't them now," said Ellen, her patience quite deserting her at the prospect of another chapter of past joys.

"No, the Yankees tuck 'em both. But he's got a cow, if you could—" and she looked suggestively at Ellen.

"Ride a cow!" said Ellen, laughing. "Anxious as I am to get on, I hardly think I could do that."

"Well, she's dry, en' she's very gentle. I thought maybe you could."

In her desperation it might have been that even the offer of the cow would have been accepted, but fortunately a diversion was effected by a rolling of wheels, and a lumbering road-wagon, drawn by two meagre horses, which doubtless possessed all the qualifications necessary to private life, and were lame, halt, and blind all three. The wagon was loaded with rather a heterogeneous mingling of fence-rails, timbers with the nails still in them, and gnarled logs of wood, all piled in pell-mell. It was evidently the gleanings of fuel from a deserted camp-ground. But Ellen only saw a way out of her dilemma, and the vehicle had hardly come in sight before she was at the door, hailing the driver. Of course he was old (for but few young men were to be seen outside of the army), and both deaf and blind, as was evident from his obtuseness both to the loud cries of "Stop! stop!" and the sight of the young lady waving her hand from the doorway. Agonised at the thought of losing an opportunity, our young heroine sped forward like an arrow from the bow, and the driver was almost thrown from his seat by her sudden appearance at his horses' heads.

The horses were stopped and the explanation given, though it had to be repeated many times before it reached the ears of the old man.

"And won't you take me on as far as you go?" said Ellen.

The man looked ruefully at the wagon and then at his miserable team.

Ellen understood him without words.

"I don't care how rough it is," she said, approaching him and speaking loud enough even for him to hear without difficulty, "and I am very little weight, indeed I am, and I can walk whenever the horses get tired; but I am so anxious to get on into the Confederate lines. I'll pay you well for your trouble."

"Oh, never mind that," said the old man. "I was jest thinking that it was a pretty rough place for sich a young lady as you; but if you choose to try it to Mount Jackson, you are heartily welcome."

"God bless you for it!" said Ellen, joyfully; "I won't keep you waiting a moment," and in a very short time after she was mounted on her rough seat with her trunk beside her, taking a smiling leave of her quondam host and his daughter, who stood in the road to see her off.

She had scarce calculated her ability to stand the roughness of her vehicle, as it jolted from side to side, bringing her in contact with the timbers most uncomfortably, and in the first half-mile she felt so bruised and sore that she doubted her ability to endure it any longer; but the old man turning round just then to see how she was getting on, a sudden fear of being left behind expanded her face into a smile, and prompted the assurance, delivered with a good deal of courage but very little truth, that she was "getting on delightfully."

And so the process of reducing the young lady to mincemeat continued, she enduring with the greatest fortitude blows which in ordinary times would have brought a shriek to her lips. She could not bear it longer, however, as she felt herself growing faint under the continued suffering.

"How much farther is it to Mount Jackson?" she

shouted into her companion's ear the next time he turned around towards her.

"What you say?" answered the old man, putting his hand up to his ear and stopping the progress of the wagon.

"How much farther is it to Mount Jackson?" repeated Ellen, in still louder tones.

"No, that ain't Mount Jackson," said he, still obtuse. "Mount Jackson's a good five mile *furder* yet."

"I believe then I'll have to try and walk it," said Ellen, the tears coming into her eyes as her bruised limbs made themselves evident from sudden change of position.

"Why, what's the matter?" said her guide; "too rough for you?"

"I believe so. I don't think I can stand this any longer; I am suffering so terribly from these boards and logs."

"Hum," grunted the old man, hearing only a portion of her complaint, "ef you can't stand, how do you expect to walk five miles? Wait, lem'me see," he added, dismounting from his horse and coming towards her, and speaking with good-natured gruffness. "You young gals ain't worth much nohow; you was sorter made to be put in a glass case to be looked at."

"If the glass case happened to be on this vehicle it would have been smashed long ago," said Ellen, too low to elicit an answer from her companion, who went on examining her situation.

"Well now, seems to me that orter be easy as a rocking-chair jest down in that hollow, with this log on this side en' that plank at the back. These nails is a little onconvenient to the back, but I can fix that comfortabler for you."

"Oh, thank you," said Ellen earnestly, looking with horror upon a return to the seat of torture; "I do not think I can try it again. Let me walk, and you can bring my trunk for me."

But upon being lifted down she found herself so bruised and lamed from the ride that she could only totter to the side of the road, where she sank down, and all of her courage deserting her, she burst into tears.

"Tut, tut, tut," said the old man, really distressed to see her troubled; "well now, that's too bad! Stop, wait; could you ride behind me on the horse? That would be easier-like."

Interpreting her hesitation rightly as a parley with herself as to the propriety of the move, he continued:

"Law! you wouldn't mind an old man like me, what has grandchildren old as you is; jest you try it. Old Dobbin he's as gentle as a sucking-pig and easy as a cradle."

Had there been any other resource, the young lady would have declined this offer; but there was no option. She could not walk, nor ride as she had been doing, so with the best grace she might she saw the old man fix his cloth coat on the horse for her to sit on, and then allowed herself to be drawn up after him, overcoming with an effort the fears of being kicked by the horse or run over by the wagon.

"Now don't mind me, jest you hold on tight; ef you don't you'll slip down in the road and git hurt," said her escort.

She did mind him, however, and it was only as she found the prediction of her slipping off into the road about to be verified that she clung to him as tightly as he could have wished. The old man chuckled merrily

as he felt her slight arms tightening about him, but the only remark he made was:

"Gals is ondoubtedly slippery critters, en' it takes a monsus tight hold to keep 'em in place. Why, Miss, when I was courtin' my Betsy Ann — that's my wife, Ma'am, who's got twenty-two grandchildren now — she give me the slip three individual times, owin' to Mike Simmons bein arter her too; en' it wasn't tell I told her I was goin' to Texas that she cum roun', en' Mike wasn't nowhar."

Ellen strove to enjoy the joke to the same degree with the narrator, but the anxieties and hardships of the day were beginning to tell upon her spirits; and if the old man had possessed eyes in the back of his head, he would have seen her weeping silently behind the shield afforded by his back.

"So you say them Yankees banquished you from home?" continued he after a silence of a few minutes. "They is rascals, that's a fact! What had you done?"

Ellen narrated, in as few words as she could, the substance of her adventures.

The interest of the story, on which he was forced to bestow his undivided attention in order to hear it, the rumbling of the wagon, and the fact that the broad back of the man intercepted the vision of Ellen Randolph, conspired to prevent either one of the parties from being conscious of an approaching horse, or from seeing that his rider, a young Confederate, was even now displaying no inconsiderable amount of interest in the tones of Ellen's voice, whose clear notes, raised to overcome her companion's infirmity, fell upon his ear when he was still some distance off.

It was curious to note the change which passed over

his bronzed face as the first sound caught his attention; it spoke of recognition, astonishment, anxiety and agitation. He first moderated the pace of his steed and then stopped it entirely, listening intently. As the voice came nearer and nearer he caught the words :

"And they sent me from my home on half an hour's notice, under a guard of twenty-eight men."

"Miss Randof, eempossible!" said the horseman as the continued progress of the wagon brought it alongside of him, and the confirmation of his first conviction reached him in the familiar features of Ellen Randolph appearing from behind the person of her escort.

At the same moment her glance fell upon the face of Mr. Hautman. All unprepared as she was for his appearance, it is a mercy that she did not throw herself from the horse, which would have brought her directly under the wheels of the wagon. As it was, the old man found himself suddenly released from the clasp in which she had held him, and had only time to stop his horses by a jerk of the reins before the catastrophe occurred, and the young lady stood crying and exclaiming in the road :

"Oh, Mr. Hautman! Mr. Hautman! I am so glad!"

"What is de matter, my dear young lady?" said the gentleman, dismounting and seizing her hand.

It was some time before the necessary explanations could be given, as Ellen was far too much excited, agitated, and embarrassed to attempt a very lucid account of herself; but sufficient was gathered from her incoherent expressions to give him a clue to the situation.

"Wait for me a minit," said the impulsive German, darting up the road a short distance and returning immediately. "I haf take a leetel curse of de Yankees

now, en' I feels better; but the Dievel will git Meelroy for dis, be sadeesfied on dat."

Ellen's laugh checked her tears at his comical earnestness of manner.

"I think, if I might choose, I would rather he would get Purdy," said she. "I don't think Milroy was as active a mover in my expedition as he was."

"Well, he vill git bofe den," said Mr. Hautman, glad to see that she was recovering some of her old spirit.

But the journey to Mount Jackson must be continued. In vain Mr. Hautman contended for the privilege of substituting himself as her escort and the half of his horse as her mode of conveyance; for Ellen with strange obstinancy positively declined his offer, and declared her preference for her former arrangement. So the young gentleman was obliged to content himself with the second post of honor, by her side, from which position he managed to elicit the information he desired about herself and their mutual friends in Winchester, giving her in return a graphic account of his own adventures, particularly dwelling upon his visit to Rose Hill, where he had so successfully sustained the character of piano-tuner.

The rest of the ride to Mount Jackson proved much shorter than Ellen had any idea it would do. It is rather a pretty little village, with a background of mountains, with the smiling fields and pretty country-houses dotting the landscape between. At the entrance of the town were the large brown board hospital buildings erected by General Jackson, forming the first traces which Ellen had seen of the presence of the Southern army, and even that was a footprint of the past. The hotel was either more inviting

in appearance, or Ellen was disposed to take a more cheerful view of everything now that she no longer felt herself alone. The kind-hearted old man who had lent her such material aid, took leave of his young charge with an empressment of manner which led Ellen to fear that he might attempt to act out his character of grandfather. He positively refused all remuneration for his services; and Ellen promised if she ever came down the Valley again that she would hunt him out in his home among the hills, and make the acquaintance of "Betsy Ann."

Night had almost drawn her curtain as Ellen threw herself into an easy-chair in the little parlor, to wait until Mr. Hautman made some arrangements for a room for her. Still dreadfully wearied and bruised from her long journey, and almost sick from fasting, the sight of a familiar friendly face had turned the whole current of her feelings. A cheerful talk and a hearty laugh are at last the best tonic Nature affords, and this the bright, joyous temper of Mr. Hautman always gave her.

"Vill you go to your room now, or vait till supper?" said that gentleman, making his appearance after a few moments' absence.

"Oh, to my room by all means," said Ellen, glancing at her disordered attire; "though I shall be ready for my supper, and glad to get it, in a few minutes."

It was at this same supper that Ellen received her first lessons in Southern cookery. They were introduced into a long, low room, with a table spread through its entire length, and around it were seated a motley crowd, mostly soldiers, though there was a light sprinkling of peaceable citizens and women. Ellen could not avoid

a consciousness as she entered the room that she was the observed of all observers, as every eye turned upon her curiously, and it was with flaming cheeks that she gained her seat.

"Tea or coffee?" asked the waiter.

"Coffee," answered Ellen, inwardly rejoicing at the prospect of the stimulating beverage which would be so particularly grateful after her fatiguing journey. A cupful of liquid of promising appearance further excited her anticipations of enjoyment, which, however, were completely blasted by the first mouthful.

"What is it?" she asked, turning to Mr. Hautman, who was watching her dismay with intense enjoyment.

"Deed not you say to de vaiter you vant coffee?" he asked in pretended surprise.

"Yes," said Ellen in a low tone; "but I never tasted such stuff as this."

"Fy, it is de var best rye-coffee," said he, laughing.

"Well," said the young lady, still in a tone which could not extend beyond his ear, "I am very sorry, but I can't drink it. Ask the waiter for a cup of tea."

"Bring some tea to de lady," said Mr. Hautman, stopping a waiter who was hurrying past with all the self-importance which attaches to his peculiar profession.

"Sassafras or t'other?" said the man.

"Sassafras or t'other!" repeated Ellen, feeling as if she had somehow chanced upon a people speaking a new language to her. "What does he mean?"

"He means," said Mr. Hautman, as soon as he could command himself sufficiently, "vill you have sassafras tea or de udder?"

"Yes, ma'am," said the waiter. "Sassafras is the regular article; t'other is two dollars extra a cup."

"Bring me genuine tea," said Ellen, feeling greatly embarrassed at the mere mention of *price* before a gentleman.

"Genwine! genwine!" said the man, thoughtfully. "We is jist out of dat article, Ma'am; 'spect a new supply to-morrow."

This was too much for Mr. Hautman, whose explosive laugh startled everybody in the room.

"Bring de yong lady some t'udder den," said he, as soon as he could speak; and Ellen enjoyed a very palatable cup of green tea in spite of the brown sugar sweetening to which she was obliged to submit.

Notwithstanding her fatigue it was a long time after Ellen had retired to rest before she could so command the bewildering maze of thought which beset her brain as to go to sleep; and in the midst of the chaos of trouble and anxiety, the pleasure of one meeting which had renewed a delightful past, one word which opened up a sweet future, had their places. I leave my reader to guess what they were.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"When the latest strife is lost, and all is done with,
Ere we slumber in the spirit and the brain,
We drowse back to dreams, to days that life began with,
And their tender life returns to us again.

"I have cast away the tangle and the torment
Of the cords that bound my life up in a mesh;
And the pulse begins to throb that long lay dormant
'Neath their pressure, and the old wounds bleed afresh;

"And my being is confused with new experience,
And changed to something other than it was;
And the Future with the Past is set at variance,
And Life falters with the burdens which it has."

—Owen Meredith.

We have reached that point in our story which leads us away from the more desultory scenes of border warfare into the midst of that city so long contended for, so bravely defended from the first ascending to the final bursting of that fair bubble, which catching its bright hues from the hopes of a nation, danced gaily and buoyantly before it, till, like the *ignis fatuus* of the desert, it led it into bogs and quicksands and final irremediable ruin.

Richmond, built upon its many hills; the capital of Virginia, the centre of the refinement, elegance, and hospitality of the olden days, and holding fast its laurels to the latest time; Richmond chosen by a new-born nation as the capital of its new-born country; the spot around which cluster the brightest and darkest hours of the Southern Confederacy, the grave of dead

heroes and the grave of dead hopes — who can ever look upon the footprints of her past without a thrill, or read the pages of her story without a tear!

Richmond, in spite of the many wrinkles, which of right her ripe years should have imprinted upon her fair face, preserves an appearance of perpetual youth, due to the general greenness and freshness which pervades it. It is altogether more like a village than a city, the dwelling-houses being built back from the street, with pretty enclosures between them and the hard, practical-looking brick pavements, filled with a profusion of flowers and clambering vines, and carpeted with the soft green grass. There is no crowding of the houses, no sandwiching of the people; none of the dull uniformity which distinguishes other cities, where the long line of tenement-houses reserve for a man's home no distinctive features, and where he is as apt to call at his neighbor's house as at his own.

In Richmond each dwelling has a fashion peculiar to itself. Here is one of cheerful red brick, with its green blinds and white porch, next door to the more stately brown-stone front, with its iron verandah and dark window-frames; and just across the way, with an undeniable smile of self-gratulation, is a pretty little cottage, looking like a refreshing glimpse of country-life in the midst of the city.

In the business portion of the town, however, these peculiarities are for the most part lost, and we find the same hard, stiff, imperturbable proportions which distinguish other cities, a sort of grim, determinate expression which the unswerving pursuit of gain bestows alike on individuals and houses. The city is bounded on the south by the James River, which in-

deed cuts it in two, though the southern portion assumes the name of Manchester. It extends north from the river over a succession of elevated table-lands, bearing the names of Shockoe, Gamble, Church, and Hollywood; and from any portion of the city the James River presents a striking object in the view, its abrupt windings in an out bringing it for many miles within the range of vision. Church Hill occupies the north-eastern portion of the town, and is crowned by the white walls of Chimborazo Hospital, looking like the battlements of a formidable fortress in the distance. Shockoe Hill is entirely covered by the streets of the city, and occupies the western portion of it. Gamble's Hill is a beautiful elevation directly above the river, and is used by the people as a place of resort for purposes of exercise and amusement, a sort of free park, where the children are permitted to play at will, and in warm weather it is dotted over with them, rolling hoops, playing ball, and making the air vocal with their fresh young voices.

To the west of Gamble's Hill is Hollywood, holding a separate place from the town proper — a city in itself, a city whose population is ever on the increase, and the pestilence and war which thin the busy streets but adds to it. It is the silent city of the dead!

The site has been well chosen, and Nature is permitted to have her own wild way there, except for occasional softening touches of her ruggedness which art bestows, but so gently that not one grace is marred. It is a succession of hill and valley, with rippling streams running with subdued murmurs among. Here the mourner may go and weep by the grave of her loved and lost, and not fear the curious eye. The dead

lie in the midst of Nature, in silent nooks, sheltered by the dark cypress and pine. Here, "the rich and poor meet together." "Dust to dust, ashes to ashes." There on the hill-top is reared a lofty monument, speaking eloquently of the virtues, station, and wealth of the dust which lies under; and in the valley below is the lowly headstone, bearing name and date, and that is all; but they each lie in the bosom of the same kind Mother-Earth, and the God of their spirits knows no difference.

It was an early spring twilight, when night was contending successfully with day, and art, for once usurping the cause of the fallen monarch, was beginning to supply her place with the twinkling lights which shone like long lines of ruddy stars along the side-walks.

In an unpretending dwelling in a quiet, retired street, Mrs. Mason and her daughter sat at work, their ears evidently intent upon disentangling the various voices from a babel of sound in the room next to them, the door of which was open. Baby-language in its different stages, mingled with the graver tones of maturer years, letting fall variously words of tenderness, remonstrance, command, entreaty, and admonition, now quieting a fretful cry, and now subduing boisterous playfulness.

"There, Charlie, let sister Annie undress you. Oh, Mamie, you saucy little rogue! shut up your blue eyes; see! baby is watching you. Cynthia, my darling, put that down. I shall be glad when you are all asleep."

"Mamma! mamma!" called out a little voice, "see, Charlie has gone!" and as the words were spoken, a frolicsome, half-dressed figure dashed in through the open door, followed by a little girl, with a sober, motherly face, quite too old and sedate for the setting of flaxen curls by which it was surrounded.

Charlie showed plainly where was his most certain refuge, as he bounded into Aunt Mary's arms and laughed defiance from that citadel.

The little girl stopped short, with a face where annoyance, anger, and uncertainty all took their stand. At last turning to Mrs. Mason, she said, with a womanly dignity which sat ludicrously enough on her infantile face:

"Grandma, what am I to do? Poor Mamma has so much trouble, and I try to help her; but Charlie is a bad boy, and Aunt Mary 'courages him. I can't say *must* to her; but, really, Charlie ought to go to bed," and the little woman flourished a night-gown she carried in her hand as a badge of her office.

"Mary," said Mrs. Mason, "you do spoil that child terribly. Charlie, go with sister Annie; don't give any more trouble."

But Charlie still resisted until Aunt Mary whispered in his ear. Evidently it was a case of bribery and corruption, as he answered aloud:

"And a apple too?"

"Yes."

"And a cake?"

"Yes."

"And take a walk down to the river and frow stones in?"

"Yes, if you are a good boy and go right to bed."

These important preliminaries settled, the young man permitted himself to be led away by the big sister, whose brow cleared at the solution of her difficulties.

I have my own private doubts whether the apple and the cake, the walk and the whispered reward were rightly due, as from the sounds issuing through the

open door it was evident that it commanded the united energies and strategy of principal and subordinate officers to get the "good boy" in bed, though it was at last accomplished; and a lady in deep mourning, with the chastened light of a great sorrow upon her face, appeared through the open door, closely followed by the "little woman," who, raising her hands and shaking her head from side to side as an appeal for sympathy, after the manner of women of larger growth, said:

"Oh, Aunt Mary, that boy will give Mamma a great deal of trouble if you don't stop spoiling him; he is perfectly 'corrigible now. Oh me! I most wish all our boys was girls."

They all smiled at the precocity of the youthful guardian, and Mrs. Marshal said:

"It is true Charlie is more trouble than all the rest of the children put together just now, and it is a good deal due to Aunt Mary's spoiling; but he is going to be the man of the house after awhile, sister Annie," and an expression of pain crossed her face even while she smiled.

"I hope he won't grow up in time to be killed in the war," said the child.

Mrs. Marshal rose hastily and turned away to hide the touch on the raw spot in her heart. When she next spoke there was no tremor of the voice to attract attention; she even said cheerfully:

"Come, little woman, let's get ready for tea. I expect Grandma and Aunt Mary are hungry by this time," and in a few moments the preparations for the simple repast were laid on the table. The rattling of the cups acted as a stimulus to the dormant life in the next room, and a company of infantry organised themselves into a

storming party under the command of the gallant Captain Charles, having for their war-cry, "I want some bread!" echoed variously — "I want shum bed! I wantie bed! bed!"

A parley with the enemy ensued which resulted in a compromise, and the hostile party retired peaceably, with their hands full, to slumber on the fruits of their victory, namely, crumbs.

This commotion prevented the sound of carriage wheels at the door from being heard, and also the ring at the bell. So the surprise was unmitigated by preparation when the door opened and Ellen Randolph appeared in it, followed by Mr. George Holcombe.

"Any admittance for a stranger?" said she, laughing at the astonishment of the various members of the party.

Explanations and questions were the order of the day, and the night was far advanced before Ellen's long story was finished and the traveller permitted to rest.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form:
Then have I reason to be fond of grief!"

KING JOHN.

For some days after the sad death of her child, Margaret Murray seemed, so to speak, in an amazement of grief. She excited the utmost anxiety of her friends by her sad unlikeness to herself. She seemed to have no power of resistance, but was a mere passive machine in their hands. All her strength of will was gone with her interest in her surroundings. She would lie all day perfectly quiet, her eyes open, until in sheer despair Mrs. Holcombe, Mary, or Mammy would propose a change — a walk, or for her to sit in Mammy's easy-chair; then without a word she would rise up with her wan cheeks and tearless eyes, and do as she was told with a weary movement, as if life's light had burned itself out. Always reticent of her feelings, she was more so than ever now. Grief and she were sisters, and dwelt alone —

"the grief that does not speak,
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break."

Once only she seemed willing to speak and be spoken to; it was in one of those silent watches of the night when sleep flies the eyelids, and the tossing, troubled spirit longs for the light. Distressed by her tossing

and sighs, Mrs. Holcombe, who slept with her, said, putting her arms about her:

"My sister — child — what is it? Let me help you."

"Oh, Mamma!" — it was a cry and a groan — "my baby cries for me all the time, and I cannot get to him."

Mrs. Holcombe had never lost a child, but instinct taught her what the feeling must be when the mother's self-denying care is no longer needed, when imagination fills out the vacancy for a moment and retires, leaving the sense of loss more intense. She said in her gentle, loving voice:

"My darling, is it no comfort to feel that he will never weep again? The Saviour with His own soft hand has wiped away his tears. Try to think of this, dear. And a thought has occurred to me so often in the last few days with regard to our darling baby, which to me is sweet: that we may live out long years, years which would have seen him grown to manhood, blotting out from our memories his baby loveliness; we may lie down burdened with cares, disappointments, losses, afflictions, and clasp death as a boon, and then I am sure we will find it sweet to meet our baby with all of his baby loveliness purified and spiritualised; it will be very sweet to find him yet a baby, unsoiled and untouched by the taint of sin and care as when we gave him up. Oh, Margie, rejoice in being the mother of an angel; it is a great glory."

She was glad to feel her sobbing; tears came so seldom, and her eyes looked dry and hot as if they craved the moisture.

"I seem to feel nothing," she said at length; "my heart is like a stone. Oh if I could only lay my head on my husband's bosom!"

"Let us hope it won't be long, dearie; but don't forget you have to help him to bear it. Don't add to his grief by meeting him thus."

"No! no! I must not. Poor fellow! Help me, Mamma; I cannot do anything without you."

"Well, go to sleep now, as the first step."

She was a long time quiet before her regular breathing conveyed to her bed-fellow the welcome intelligence that her remedy had been taken. Long and anxiously did Mrs. Holcombe ponder over this matter, and before morning dawned she had determined to take some decisive step with regard to their present condition, a change of scene being absolutely necessary for Margaret.

It seemed strange to her at first to be taking the lead; she was so timid and had always depended upon others: but there was a firmness and character under her soft exterior which the present emergency developed.

She was glad to see that their conversation was not forgotten, as when her wearied eyes opened from the only sleep which had visited them, she saw Margaret already dressed, standing before the window.

"Up and dressed, dearie?" she said, jumping out of bed with a smile of congratulation; "and here, lazy woman that I am, I am still asleep, with the bright sun shining in my face."

It required no great penetration to see through the mask which this gay exterior constituted, and none knew that better than Margaret Murray, though she turned with an answering smile which spoke sadly of renewed determination to fight against this luxury of sorrow which was fast consuming her.

As soon as the business of dressing was over, the two women set to work to put to rights the simple little apartment, smiling over their awkwardness in the unusual duties. They were interrupted by the entrance of Mammy.

"There, never mind, Misstis," said the old woman in a mortified tone of voice, "dis ain't no fittin' work for you. Set down; I'll have it all straight in a minute." And although Mrs. Holcombe tried to convince her that it was the best thing for them to have to exert themselves, it was no use; she never would stand by and see the white ladies working.

This business dispensed with, a table was set in the centre of the room and the frugal meal placed upon it. It consisted merely of corn bread and ham, no butter, tea or coffee; and yet these ladies, accustomed to all the elegances and luxuries of life, sat down to it without a word of reference to their past. Care and sorrow had built their nest too securely in the depths of their hearts to allow room for such minor considerations. Old Mammy and Uncle Bob stood behind their chairs, striving to repair all other deficiencies by their formal attention to the old-time etiquette of the table, and never in their best days had the ladies been served with more loving attention.

"Now, dearie," said Mrs. Holcombe when breakfast was over, speaking to Mrs. Murray, "I want Mary and yourself to take Eddy out into the grove; perhaps in the fields you may find some wild strawberries, and Mammy and myself will go over to the dear old garden and see if we can find anything for dinner."

She had purposely chosen the direction leading away from the new-made ruins of the house for their rambles,

and privately admonished Mary to keep her sister busy and interested as much as she could. "You, too, look pale, darling," she said, patting her cheek; "the fresh air will do you good also. Remember who it is that has sent our trials, or at least permitted them, and don't faint or be discouraged; I feel confident that the end is near."

As soon as she left the house she confided to Mammy a scheme she had formed.

"I intend," she said, "to go directly to Captain Brown and see if I cannot induce him to send us through the lines. Margaret must have a change of scene, or she will either die or lose her reason."

"Humph," said Mammy, "I has my doubts, Misstis, whether 'twill be any account to you. Howsumdeaver, you knows best."

Their progress was slow, owing to Mammy's feebleness, and they instinctively took the longest way round to avoid the blackened walls, the sight of which brought such keen pain to their hearts. They had not gone very far, however, before they saw a party of cavalry approaching, and at their head Captain Brown.

Mrs. Holcombe had thought herself fully nerved for the interview, but she could not repress the shudder the mere sight of him brought. It did not prevent her raising her hand, as an intimation that she desired to speak with him.

"Mrs. Holcombe, is it possible!" said he, leaping from his horse. "Can I serve you?" There was an eagerness in his manner which drew her eyes to his face. There was a change there which she could not read; but could she have known the tortures to which he had been subjected since the interview at the cabin,

she would have understood it better. His sin had found him out and was persistently pursuing him, assuming the form of Margaret Murray as she looked when she stood beside the body of her dead child, her accusing eye looking reproachfully at him as she pointed him out as the incendiary and murderer. Sometimes her broken voice would break upon his ear with all the distinctness of reality as she said, "Yes, I pity you." Night and day, with the persistency and horror of a spiritual visitation, did his imagination thus pursue him until he feared to be alone or unoccupied for a moment. His men looked on with wonder while he rode hither and thither, ever projecting some new expedition with unflagging energy. But night had to come. He might lay the evil spirit during the day; but when darkness covered the earth and men slumbered around him, in vain he closed his bodily eyes while his mental eyes took in the vision of the tall, dark, pale woman and her dead child. And the words, "I pity you! I pity you! I pity you!" rose and fell with the beating of his heart, changed its tone from groan to shriek, and back again from shriek to groan. So horrible was it to him that if he could have rebuilt Rose Hill by a word, and witnessed Margaret Murray in all the radiant triumph of her beauty and happiness, he would have done it gladly, eagerly. All night he had been pondering how he could relieve himself from this relentless nightmare. He even, wretched man that he was, framed some sort of a prayer for deliverance, but he rose with the question still unsettled; and the sight of Mrs. Holcombe standing by the roadside with uplifted hand was the first ground for hope he had experienced. No wonder he greeted her eagerly, and listened as a man

under condemnation would do for his reprieve, for the first words which should fall from her lips.

"I come to ask if there is no way by which we could be conveyed through the lines to our friends. My daughter's condition is such that change of scene is absolutely necessary."

It is strange that this her first sentence should have revived for an instant the mad passion to subdue the will of Margaret in the mind of this man.

"Did — did — she send you to me to make the request?" he asked.

"Oh no, of course not," was the surprised answer; "she does not even know of my coming. Mrs. Murray is peculiar about some things, and I doubt whether she would have agreed to the step, though now I suppose she would scarce resist; her power of will seems utterly gone, she can be led like a child." She spoke sadly, and the man turned away to hide the effect of her words. They conjured up before him a picture too painful to be contemplated: this glorious type of womanhood, strong in everything and leading by the mere force of her character, reduced by the grief with which he had deluged her to the weakness of a little child.

"Ah, unreasonable man!" whispered the demon of his imagination in his ear, "is it not the result you labored for? Glory in it now! This is your triumph — rejoice! This is the hour you have dreamed of — welcome it!"

But alas! too often does it happen that, like the apples of Sodom, our gratified desires turn to ashes upon our lips.

"We fear everything for her," continued Mrs. Holcombe, hastening to deepen the impression she saw she

had made, "unless we can remove her from scenes so pregnant with grief for her."

He put out his hand as if to stop her, and said eagerly:

"What would you have me do? For God's sake, Madam, tell me, and let me lay this tormenting devil which continually pursues me! Speak, Madam, what do you wish?"

"Give us the means of going to our friends. Our home is gone, our means are gone; we have nothing left but — but our graves in this sad spot. Let us go —"

"When and where you will, only away from here," he said.

"To-morrow?" she asked.

"To-day; now, if you please. I have an ambulance, and can send you under flag of truce. The Rebels are falling back towards Fredericksburg, and each day increases the distance between us. They are now twenty miles off; so do not delay longer than you can help."

It reminded Jean of the King of Egypt thrusting out the children of Israel when he found that their presence brought down God's curse upon him, and she silently thanked Him for this evidence of His care over them.

"We have nothing to prevent our going at once," she said. "Unhappily, we are not much cumbered with baggage."

"You mean to reproach me, I suppose," he said, wincing under her words, but speaking doggedly.

"No; I simply state a fact. We have only ourselves to move."

"How many go?" asked Captain Brown.

"Myself, two daughters, and little son make up the party," was the answer.

"En' me en Bob, Misstis," said Mammy, speaking for the first time.

"We can't let any negroes go through the lines," said Captain Brown.

"You is de fust of you color ever called me sich," said Mammy, indignantly. "Dey ain't but one nigger, en' you knows him better den I dus, judgin' from you wurks."

"Hush, Mammy," said Mrs. Holcombe, fearing that her cudgels in defence of her race might defeat their purpose.

"At your biddin', Misstis," said the old woman; "but sure as you leaves me wid dese debbels I'll die or kill sum of 'em."

"Oh, let her go by all means," said the man; "we are best rid of such as she. How soon can you be ready?"

"In half an hour," said Mrs. Holcombe, as she turned back towards the house.

"And, Madam," said the man, hesitating and embarrassed, "if you should have the opportunity, say to your daughter, from me — say to your daughter, Madam, that I — yes — that I am a devil incarnate. The old woman is right."

"I shall tell her," said Mrs. Holcombe, her gentle nature touched by his reckless words, "that you have done everything you could to atone for the past in facilitating this most important move."

In half an hour's time they were seated in a comfortable ambulance. Uncle Bob had decided to stay and take care of "the things"— items always holding a

high place in the affections of his race; and Aunt Ailsie and himself, the only two left on the plantation, waved an adieu, with tearful eyes.

A cavalry-guard accompanied them, and the driver informed the ladies that Captain Brown had furnished the ambulance with everything necessary for their journey.

After they had driven about ten miles, the guard displayed conspicuously a white flag at the head of the column, and a like adornment was fixed to the roof of the vehicle, and from that time anxious eyes perused the distance, hoping to catch the first glimpse of the gray uniforms of the Confederates, but they were disappointed. Everywhere they read the sad signs of war in the desolation and poverty of the country, but more than the allotted twenty miles were passed and still there were no Confederates. At length the Captain of the party called a halt, and a consultation seemed to be carried on as to what had better be done. After about ten minutes he rode up to the side of the ambulance and said, touching his cap respectfully:

"Ladies, our orders were positive not to take you over twenty miles and to return to camp to-night; but I felt so certain, from information gathered some distance back, that we should reach protection for you at this point, that I ventured to extend the limit, but I can do so no farther."

"You don't mean to say, Sir, that you will leave us in the open country alone?" said Mrs. Holcombe, alarmed.

"Oh no, Ma'am, by no means; but I will have to take you to the next farm-house and let you get on from there. I cannot transgress my orders beyond that."

The next farm-house proved a sorry-looking affair, a

wooden tenement scarce too large for the comfortable accommodation of their own party. Several children were playing in the road, but stopped upon the appearance of the cavalcade and stood staring, their straight sunburnt yellow hair waving in the breeze. As soon as they distinguished the blue uniforms they turned and fled, and the travellers heard the frightened cry of "Yankees! Yankees!"

"Easy to tell their politics," said the driver, laughing. "I think you will find friends, ladies."

From the appearance of the house it at first seemed doubtful whether they would find anything, as every part of it was shut up as tight as the dilapidation of the building allowed. It was built of wood, but here and there were gaps in the wall where a board had been torn off to supply some urgent need; about half of the window panes were out, and their places variously supplied with paper, colored rags and bloated pillows, until it looked not unlike a patchwork quilt of irregular pattern. Everything presented the most melancholy picture of poverty, neglect and ruin. The fields were uncultivated, the fences gone; even what had once been an enclosure around the house was turned out to the common. Here and there the straggling remains of a rose-bush told of better days, and in what was once a garden some imperturbable garden-herbs stuck it out, refusing to succumb to the extraordinary pressure of the times, and a few pinks and jonquils of strong constitutions had managed to outlive the general mortality.

"Promises poorly," said the leader of the party as he dismounted and threw his bridle to one of the men.

"Hallo!" he called; but as no response rewarded this effort, he advanced to the door, and announced his

presence by a vigorous tattoo upon it. This had to be repeated several times before it elicited any signs of life; but at last the door was cautiously opened, and the frightened face of a woman appeared at the aperture.

"Well, my good woman," said the man, "we were just about to force an entrance, to see if you were not all dead."

"I most wish we was," said the woman sullenly; "it's harder to live then to die these times."

"Tut! tut! don't be so desponding; better times ahead always. I want to know if you can give these ladies shelter for the night; they are going South, and hoped to find their friends before this."

"Who is they friends?" asked the woman, looking, it must be confessed, rather dismayed at the request.

"The Johnnie Rebs, of course," was the answer; "are they about here?"

"Oh yes, they is 'bout here all de time; but I ain't got nothin' for a passle of women and childern to eat. I am a poor lone woman myself, en' me and my childern will starve pretty soon, I expect." The composure with which this expectation was enunciated was a melancholy feature of the times. "Starving pretty soon" was at the door too constantly to excite terror.

"We have enough food to last us for the night," said Mrs. Holcombe from the ambulance, "and for the lodging you shall be well paid."

"Oh well, Madam, you is freely welcome to that," said the woman; "but it's mighty poor doings I'se got for you anyhow."

This question being settled, the work of unloading was soon accomplished, and the little party of exiles,

after taking leave of their protectors, entered the house. They were agreeably surprised in the accommodations it afforded, as the furniture was passably good, and they found themselves furnished with two chambers, containing all that was absolutely necessary to existence, if no more.

The disappointments and exertions of the day seemed quite to have exhausted Margaret and Mrs. Holcombe, and Mary easily persuaded her to lie down and rest a while. The anxiety to communicate with her husband was too intense, however, to allow a condition of quiescence for any length of time, and they determined to adjourn down-stairs, to see if some mode of communication could not be devised.

"Well," said their landlady, to whom they stated their desire, "ef Bill Myers wus here he'd go for you sartain: He's mostly here of days, and he may be in afore night yit."

"Our condition," said Mrs. Holcombe, "is so sad just now, without home or friends, until we can reach our husbands, that we will do anything to accomplish that."

"I s'pose so," said Mrs. Durst sympathisingly. "What is it they calls you all?"

"I don't understand you," said Mrs. Holcombe.

"Shure! you people as is druv from you homes en' goes 'bout the country sponging on other people,—*vagabones*, or some sich name."

"Refugees," suggested Mary.

"Ah, *fugees*, that's it. I knowed it was somethin', but I sorter disremembered the name."

"But I beg you to understand we don't intend to sponge on other people," said Mary, a little indignantly.

"Oh no," added Mrs. Holcombe, "we shall make a home for ourselves somewhere, and then we hope to have it in our power to return some of Mrs. Durst's kindness to us."

"S'pose so," said the woman, bowing her thanks. "Why, la! I do b'lieve thar is Bill Myers comin' now."

If Bill Myers was a tall, middle-aged, long-legged contryman, whose suit of gray showed signs of hard service, and whose boots had the merit of matching the rest of his attire, being plentifully spattered with mud from the soles up to the place where the gray pants found their refuge within their recesses: this probably was Bill, who now strode into the room, making a rough obeisance to the ladies, whose unexpected presence embarrassed him not a little.

"Can you tell us anything of the —— Virginia Cavalry?" said Mrs. Holcombe, precipitately, without waiting for the formula of an introduction.

"Yes, Marm," said the man, "I orter be able, sartain, as that's my own regiment; it's all round here."

"Oh, is Captain Murray's company with it?" said Margaret, unable any longer to control her anxiety.

"Yes, Marm; the Capting's company camps to-night up the creek about five mile or so. I met him a little bit agone."

"You met him! Oh, Mamma, so near! He might be here to-night if he only knew. Oh, could you get us a message to him to-night? He is my husband, and I must see him," and she burst into tears.

"Why, la! Marm, don't you take on so," said the man, with rough kindness; "I kin take a message to him quicker'n a kite. Jist you write your line, en' I will be off in five minutes."

It did not take long to write, being only :

"Oh, Robert, come to me quickly !

"Your own MARGARET."

"Mamma," said Margaret, as the sound of the horse's hoofs died away in the distance, "I am going up to my room ; I cannot meet him here, I must be alone. Send him to me when he comes."

They let her have her own way, knowing that solitude is often the best tonic the wounded heart can have.

It might have been three-quarters of an hour after that two horsemen dashed up, and throwing themselves from their saddles, hurried into the house. They proved to be Captain Murray and Captain Williams.

"For God's sake, Jean," said the former as he embraced her, "where are Margaret and the boy ? and what does all this mean ? "

"Margaret is waiting for you up-stairs. We are homeless, Robert. Rose Hill was burned on Wednesday last by Hunter's order, and we were sent through the lines under flag of truce."

"Rose Hill burned ! " exclaimed both gentlemen.

"Yes, with everything it contained," said Mrs. Holcombe, while Mary and herself gave way anew to their grief as the recollection of the scenes of the past few days came back with renewed strength to their memories.

"Go to Margaret, dear," continued Mrs. Holcombe, fearing his next question ; "she needs you, and waits for you."

Something in her manner struck him with terror, and he turned to her, his face all aflame with the rush of fears which overwhelmed him.

"Jean, is there more? — oh, tell me!"

"Don't ask me, darling brother, go to your wife," and she eagerly pointed him the way to her room.

The strong man tottered and wavered in his gait as he walked from the room. He knew that some shock was in store for him, but feebly guessed what it was, until he opened the door indicated, and a noble figure, like Niobe all bathed in tears, fled into his arms, crying:

"Oh, Robert, take me, hold me fast, for you have none but me to hold!"

We will drop the curtain over a scene too sacred even for our friendly gaze, and return to the parlor, where Mrs. Holcombe lay upon the sofa silently weeping tears of sympathy for the wrung hearts so near at hand, and Mary stood apart, explaining to Mr. Williams the particulars of the events so replete with sorrow to the narrator; nor was it any dishonor to the manhood of the brave soldier that his tears fell like rain over the piteous recital, and he longed for the power to comfort these mourners.

This impulse grew stronger each moment as he stood beside the beautiful young girl, and he resolved to break a vow once rashly made. A while after he drew Mary out into the moonlight, and putting his arm around her, said:

"Mary, I once told you that hope for your love was dead within me; but when I see you standing thus helpless and alone in your sorrow, my heart yearns over you with a tenderness which no words can express. I do not ask you to love me with the bountiful measure you bestowed upon another; but such tenderness and confidence as you have to give, give to me!

and let it be my happiness to lavish on you the full devotion of my heart. With this I will be content; for 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.' Only bestow upon me yourself to love and cherish, and I will ask no more."

Mary wept convulsively as she laid her hand in his.

"How can I ever repay your generosity and love, Mr. Williams?" she said. "Oh, if you had only spoken to me long ago, before — before that time you know of. If I had only grown to womanhood with the knowledge of your affection, I could never have placed mine as I did. But, forgive me, I cannot accept your generous offer. I would not give you less than all, and that *all* I fear is dead within me."

"You are too young, my child, to talk in that way," answered Mr. Williams; "you have scarce yet reached the period when women sound the depths of their hearts. A first girlish passion, if successful, too often leads to disappointment, and if unsuccessful, it but serves as the developer of a maturer and nobler feeling. A woman of twenty-five would seldom marry her choice at eighteen. Do not answer me unless you please, for I do not wish to force your confidence; but do you still love — do you care for any one more than you do for me?"

"If you mean, do I still love Mr. Dallam," said Mary, frankly, "no, a thousand times no! I sometimes doubt whether I ever did. I loved an ideal dressed in the attractive garb of his person, but I never loved a man who for mere gain could turn aside from principle and right. I think now of the end of that affair as an escape for me."

"Since," said Mr. Williams, smiling, "you are in the

habit of idealising people, could you not for the nonce endow me with some of these very attractive graces? You have a poor foundation, it is true, but with your imagination it might be done."

"No, I prefer you just as you are. There can be no mistake about you; you have been in the furnace and have come out pure gold."

The flattery was so very sweet that Captain Williams would have thanked her in true lover-like fashion, but Mary drew back.

"I don't want you to think, Mr. Williams," she said, "that I am a mere child who can change my toy without an effort."

"If I did," he said, "I should be the last to ask to be that toy. I don't harbor any thought of you which does not honor you and adorn you as woman never was adorned in my eyes before. You are all I want you to be, and I only ask as the crown of my life that I may win and wear you."

Again he would have kissed her upturned face, but again she put him from her, saying, "Not now, Mr. Williams, not now. I could not decide such a matter now when we are all in such trouble. It seems heartless even to think of my own happiness after the events of the past few days; I cannot even tell what I feel."

"Well," said he, joyfully accepting the hope her answer gave, "I am a perfect Jacob for patience. I have served seven years for my Rachel already, and am prepared to serve seven years more if it cannot be done in less time; but cannot you shorten my probation? When may I speak?"

"Oh, I don't know; not for a long time. I must see Papa first, and must forget a little of the past before I

can even bring my thoughts into any such channel. We leave here to-morrow, I expect, and it may be a long time before we meet; so I will say, the next time I see you you may ask me anything you please."

He was not to be rebuffed this time, and Mary carried a very blushing face back into the parlor, and upon finding it vacated, ran off up-stairs to join her mamma, though there were no confidences to-night.

She took care not to give Mr. Williams an opportunity the next morning to renew the conversation, keeping close to the side of her mother, though every now and then she would give him a shy smile which was wonderfully encouraging, and sent him back to his regiment with a hope at his heart and a light in his eye very new to him.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"One to destroy is murder by the law,
And gibbets keep the lifted hand in awe;
To murder thousands takes a specious name,
War's glorious art, and gives immortal fame."

YOUNG.

SCARCE had Captain Murray time to consign his family to a place of temporary safety, before he was forced to hurry to Fredericksburg, where he found a battle already progressing; Hooker having at last broken the spell which had for so long held the two hostile forces facing each other, with the Rappahannock moving its muddy length between, and crossing the river had precipitated the terrible battles of the Wilderness and Chancellorsville. Of the loss which cast an afflicted people upon their knees with tears and cries for mercy we will speak hereafter in its proper place; it has not to do with the present of our story.

When Hooker, after the fearful disaster to his arms, succeeded in recrossing the river with his shattered forces, he left behind him seventeen thousand men in killed, wounded and prisoners, and these added to the many thousand Confederates who fell in the same terrific struggle, filled the air with the wail, the groan, the shriek of tortured humanity, and citizen and soldier labored together night and day for the mitigation of the agony of friend and foe alike.

It was the day after the closing scenes of this battle that Captain Murray, his heart full of his own sorrows, and from the sympathy thus engendered desiring to

relieve those of others, rode towards the battle-field, supplied with such simple restoratives as he could command. Inured as he was to scenes of suffering, his heart turned sick at the sights which met him at every turn. The sky was black with clouds portending a storm, and the thunder muttered and grumbled above their heads, as if expressing the anger of Nature at the outrage done to her by such scenes; while the groans and cries of thousands upon thousands of human beings mingled with it in fearful discord, and the dead in the midst lay in quiet, seemingly more intense from the confusion and agony around them. Here and there were parties of men and women bending above the sufferers, and by kind words and tangible help alleviating their tortures. He paused at one spot where a woman knelt beside a man in his last agony, and the tear came into his eye as he heard her receiving from the failing voice his last messages of love for friends; he knew from his own bitterness what their sorrow would be when the news reached them. Not far off was a surgeon amputating a limb, while his assistant held the sponge to the mouth of the patient. Still a little further and cries for "Water, water!" or a "God have mercy!" or an imprecation terrible to hear, mingled together upon his ear, and he found plenty to engage his attention. From the midst of this babel of sound, one voice with a note of familiarity in it, uttering blasphemies too horrible for even a hint of them to stain these pages, called upon him for help. Going towards him, he found a Federal officer terribly mutilated.

"My poor fellow," he said, kneeling beside him, "don't curse God at such an hour as this; rather pray for His mercy upon your soul."

"Ha " said the man, his frightened eyes staring up at him from the gory mask which disfigured his face, "I know you! I know you! you have come to murder me!"

Is it a wonder that as the strong man above him recognised Dr. Burton, and the memory of the past rushed over him, bringing up his perfidy, his attempt on his life, his persecution of his helpless wife, his ruthless act whereby an unprotected family were left homeless, and the death of his son,—I say, is it any wonder that human nature overpowered the defences and stays which the grace of God had set up in his heart for its control, and but one passion possessed him, which must wreak itself upon the object which lay before him?

But although God in His wisdom often permits His children to be assailed by fearful temptation, He does not leave them alone to encounter it, and so He stood there unseen; and as He had once lifted His hand and bade the sea and the waves "be still," so was His control ready to be exerted when this whirlwind of passion should overstep its limits; and as the grasp of the strong man tightened upon his adversary, and he was about to fling him to the ground, whose touch would have made him a mere quivering dead thing, no longer capable of doing or receiving ill, the swift-driving clouds overhead came together with a crash of thunder, and out of the rolling and reverberating sound a voice seemed to form itself, saying, "Vengeance is mine, I will recompense, saith the Lord," and the grasp upon the trembling figure loosened. Only for an instant, however; the reign of passion was not yet over, Reason dared argue the matter with its Maker.

"'Life for life,' it said. 'He who sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' This is my warrant for taking the life of this murderer, incendiary, and liar. His life is lawfully forfeited, and I am his rightful executioner," and again was the quivering figure uplifted to be cast down a dead man.

"Thou shalt do no murder," muttered the thunder.

"Yes," said Reason, while the action suspended itself for a moment; "but it is no murder to take the life of a murderer. He is the enemy of mankind, who curses the earth on which he dwells."

"But I say unto you," said the voice, as the thunder rolled away into the distance, and its accents fell upon the ear with a gentleness, while the command still remained —"but I say unto you, 'Love your enemy, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.'"

And again was the blow suspended, and the fearful struggle in the heart of the man between reason and grace went on. Vengeance is sweet in the performing it turns to gall afterwards; and so legibly was this contest written upon the working features of this man that his writhing victim gazed upon his face with wonder and awe. He knew the knife to be uplifted above his head, that the point of the sword was at his heart, and he read condemnation and reprieve in every change of the strongly-marked face above him. At last, with a burst of passion from baffled humanity, he found himself unhurt upon the ground, with these words sounding in his ear:

"There, miserable wretch! take your few hours of life at my hands, since vengeance is denied me; but may the God who claims it for Himself punish you as

you deserve," and he turned away. But even this was not enough. Again the voice in the thunder spoke to him:

"If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head," and as if to enforce the command by the example His own bounty afforded, the clouds opened themselves, and a grateful, refreshing shower fell, cooling the wounds and relieving the burning thirst of the poor sufferers who lolled out their burning tongues to catch the cooling drops.

It was enough; he was but a servant as those elements were, and with his proud heart bowed in humility before the God of his life, he knelt beside his wounded enemy, and lifting his head gently, held a canteen to his lips, while tears dropped from his eyes upon his upturned face. Then came the voice, soft and musical as a harp-strain:

"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh the sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and upon the unjust." And hours after did the passing crowds mark that powerful figure upon his knees beside the dying man, praying with God for the parting soul.

"And do you forgive me?" said the dying accents.

"Yes, I forgive you all; and if man can do so much, oh, can you not trust the divine love of the Saviour who died for you!"

And catching a glimpse of the God-like love from the feeble light of human charity, this poor benighted sinner surrendered up his life into the hands of the God who gave it.

CHAPTER XXX.

"Oh, eloquent, just and mightie Death! Whom none could advise thou hast perswaded; what none hath dared thou hast done, and whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world: thou hast drawne together all the farre stretched greatness, all the pride and ambition of men, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, Hic jacet!"—Sir Walter Raleigh.

A sky of triumphant, glad brilliancy, where the sun dances on its wings of fire, sending down to earth beams of light freighted with false promises of an eternity without a shadow—such was the aspect of the Southern political horizon when the news of the great victory at Chancellorsville and the retreat of Hooker reached Richmond. The air was vocal with shouts of triumph, and even the most desponding gathered brightness upon their countenances at the prospect of a speedy termination of the war.

Suddenly, as in a moment, an ominous cloud, black with disappointed hope and heavy with sorrow, shot athwart the horizon, obscuring the light of the sun and spreading itself like a pall above the grief-stricken earth. For Jackson had fallen. Jackson, the Christian soldier and hero; Jackson, the right arm of General Lee; Jackson, who had hitherto seemed to bear a charmed life; Jackson, who upheld the cause by prayer, who by his own unswerving faith and courage inspired that of the entire army—Jackson had fallen!

The paralysis which succeeded the shock this news brought was like the torpor which death brings after long watching beside a friend. There was nothing

more to be done; everything seemed to stand still, hopelessly, despairingly. And then the reaction; for further news reached the city that the blow was suspended, he yet lived, and with his old strong, curt, convincing energy of determination expressed it as his opinion that he would not die. Men told how he said in his own abrupt laconic style, as he lay there all bound down and helpless from his wounds like a lion in chains, "I do not know, of course, but I think I shall get well; but the will of God be done," and a shower from the overhanging cloud lightened it of its burden for a short space. But as days went on again it gathered blackness, and as the heavy news came down the wire in its brief conciseness, telling its tale without circumlocution and without softening—"No better,"—"A bad night,"—"Pneumonia symptoms,"—"Sinking,"—the nation fell on its knees and prayed. Men who had never prayed for themselves prayed for this one life; every house was a Bethel, and on Sunday the churches were crowded with men and women met to plead the promise that when "two or three shall ask anything, it shall be done." But all in vain; the blow fell and the nation mourned, and like Rachel weeping for her children, would not be comforted.

When it was known that he was actually dead, each community vied with the other to show him honor. Richmond claimed for her soil the privilege of sheltering his dust. But no; he had requested that the Valley he so loved, where he had passed so many happy days in peace, and which had witnessed so much of his triumph in war, where the people loved him as a father and gloried in him as a leader—that the old Valley of Virginia might receive him into her bosom, and with her

blue sky overhead and her everlasting hills as the sentinels about his couch, he might rest until "time should be no longer."

His remains were, however, brought to Richmond, in order that the sorrows of the people might have a vent in tears over all that remained of their idol.

Those who were the privileged participants in the scenes of the one day he lay in state there, at the Governor's mansion, will never forget it. Old men and young men, old women and children, joined in the sad procession which thronged the avenues, waiting the moment when they might take a last look at his honored corpse.

The doors were closed until eleven o'clock, and the hours previous were held sacred to his immediate friends. But it was hard to keep out the crowd; each had some plea to offer why he should be an exception.

"Only wait, my dear madam," said the officer in charge of the door to a poor woman who pled for admittance, "until the hour appointed; his friends are in the room now."

"Friends!" said the woman through her sobs, "he was my friend too."

"Ah indeed!" was the sympathetic answer; "a personal friend then."

"I never saw him," said the woman, "but he was not less my friend; my two sons fell under his command, and they loved him. He belongs to the people, and I am one of them."

At last the doors were opened and the crowd passed in two and two through the wide hall into the lofty rooms, pausing for a moment beside a black coffin draped with the flags under which he had so often

fought, and covered with the fairest flowers wrought into every device which the taste and love of the people could frame. They saw, looking up through all of these testimonials of the love and honor of a people, a calm white face, where death had sharpened out and cut more clearly its more striking characteristics, the iron will deepened in the furrow which dented his brow, and the firmness of the thin compressed lips. There he lay, a mere shell, while the spirit which had so lately animated it was yonder!

Many sincere tears fell from eyes which saw him now for the first time; but they lacked the bitterness of those which Mrs. Mason and Ellen Randolph dropped upon the dead face as they recalled him in so many of the stirring scenes of their lives, and felt that in addition to the loss for their country they must mourn the departure of a valued friend. As they left the house they saw a crowd of people clustering about an old negro woman who bore in her arms an infant of about six months old. Their tears fell afresh upon the innocent little face as they recognised *his* child, from the strange and striking likeness stamped upon it to the dead face which had just looked up to them from the coffin.

It had been baptised the day before the battle of Chancellorsville, so that one of the latest acts of his life was the consecration to God of this his only child.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"When I consider life, 'tis all a cheat;
Yet fooled with hope, men favor the deceit,
Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay:
To-morrow's falser than the former day,
Lies worse, and while it says we shall be blest
With some new joys, cuts off what we possest."

DRYDEN.

OUR chronicler again claims his privilege, and by means of his seven-league boots steps over a space of nearly two years, two checkered eventful years, in which the hopes of the young nation passed through many fluctuations of hope and fear, rejoicing and sorrowing, which had at last settled down into a quiet endurance looking to an end a long way off. I say looking to an end a long way off, for the most sanguine could see no prospect of a speedy termination of the war, though none dared to doubt the final triumph of Southern arms. Or if one, aspiring to a wisdom above his fellows, dared hint at defeat, he was hooted down by the whole community, dubbed "croaker," and even "traitor," one who by unseasonable and unsubstantial fears demoralised the army and sapped the strength of the people. Society was against him, and society triumphed. So the voice of despondency in these latter days of the Confederacy was seldom raised. Men spoke cheerfully from policy when they could no longer do so from conviction.

The society of Richmond had never perhaps in its best days boasted the same elements of refinement and cultivation which at present crowded its limits. The

whole South had poured its contributions into its lap. Nor was money the "open sesame" to its sacred precincts; ruin was too universal. It comprised all of the beauty, intelligence, and aristocracy of the country. No class or sex had escaped the besom of destruction. Noble, high-born women who had never before served themselves in the commonest affairs of life, now cheerfully bowed their fair heads beneath the yoke of servitude, and with graceful acquiescence with the decrees of fate, shrank not from the humblest duties whereby the merest necessaries of life might be won, and each felt that the sacrifices made were in the cause they loved; they emulated their noble mothers of the Revolution, and surpassed them in their self-denials and sufferings.

In order to assist these efforts, and at the same time increase the army in the field, Government opened its offices to the ladies, and thus was enabled to reduce the number of male clerks in its different departments. The Treasury Department, the Naval, Medical, Quartermaster's and Commissary Departments, all employed large numbers of female clerks; and at nine o'clock in the morning the streets were alive with neat, busy-looking figures hurrying off to their different places of business. But even in this condition of affairs did the Southern sensitiveness upon the subject of feminine delicacy show itself, for these offices were rigidly managed by rules which, while they exacted the work of men from the fair clerks, protected them from the least publicity or contact with the common herd. The offices were strictly private, presided over by gentlemen, and no visitors except in extreme cases were allowed; the superintendents of the work were carefully chosen, generally from the class of men whose age

made them as regardful for the privacy and safety of these unfortunate ladies as they would have been for that of their own wives and daughters.

But this was not the only feature in the society of Richmond at this time. There must be a surface to everything. As the pent-up liquid comes in contact with the exhilarating air it must vent itself in foam and noise, and so the feelings of the people were kept so constantly under a pressure that as soon as the opportunity presented itself, it would foam and bubble as was its nature to do. But this foam and bubble generally confined itself to the idler portion of the community, to those who had never really suffered from the war, and failed to realise that the blow might strike home at any moment. It was curious how the necessary economy of the times came in even with this element of society, for supperless balls and tea-less parties were the order of the day. Young people would meet together and dance wildly the night through, without any refreshments to support them in the exhausting exercise. The soldiers from the field contributed much to this gaiety, as into a furlough of a few hours a Confederate always managed to compress as much enjoyment as possible.

It is a strange and noticeable leaf we turn in the study of human nature, that constant familiarity with scenes of suffering renders the heart callous to them. It is so in great epidemics where men and women laugh and dance upon the brink of their own open graves; and it is always the case in times of war that there is a recklessness of mirth and enjoyment, as if the mind sought escape from the present by living in a continual state of excitement, whose charm is that it

blinds the mind's eye and hardens the heart to the realities of life.

Thus the soldiers would without difficulty turn aside from scenes of bloodshed and violence to meet in the mad whirl of the dance those whose friends might even then be rendering up their lives upon the battle-field.

As soon as the rapid movements of the armies following the bloody battles at and near Fredericksburg allowed Captains Murray and Holcombe to think of their private affairs, they removed their families to Richmond, as not only affording the most efficient protection to them in the then unsettled condition of the whole country, but as allowing Captain Holcombe, who was stationed in Richmond, to reap and bestow the benefit of constant intercourse with them, and also as affording a convenient rendezvous for the different members of the connection who were in the army.

Accordingly some rooms were rented in a retired part of the city, and housekeeping on a very small scale was instituted. A change in their arrangements soon became necessary, however, as Mrs. Murray's nerves had been so terribly shattered by the heart-rending occurrences of one dreadful night that it wrought upon her health so seriously as to excite the utmost solicitude among her friends, and Captain Murray taking the alarm, had at once resigned his position in the army, and obtaining through the influence of friends a foreign appointment, had, with his wife, run the blockade and fixed his residence in London, where he had now lived considerably more than a year.

The change had its desired effect upon Margaret, as her fine constitution rallied promptly when removed

from the daily excitements and agitations of her former life; and her letters found their way in to her friends every now and then, bringing assurances of renewed health and spirits, and of the longing to return and share the hardships of their lives.

As soon as the way was opened, Ellen Randolph had returned with her father to Winchester, where they found Mrs. Randolph faring better than they dared to hope; the warm-hearted community of the town having made her its especial care, the different members vieing with each other in endeavors to prevent her from suffering from the enforced absence of her daughter; the young girls taking it by turns to stay with her and read to her, and the older ladies, tempting her from the seclusion of her home to theirs, managed to keep her interested and easy during the four weeks which intervened between Ellen's exit and return.

Mr. Randolph made what disposition he could of his house and furniture, and returned with his wife and daughter to Richmond, where we find them at the present period of our story, not far off on the one side from the Holcombes, and on the other from Mrs. Mason and her daughters. Ellen soon found it necessary to eke out their limited means by some exertions on her part, so she sought and obtained employment in the Commissary Department; and Mary Holcombe, as soon as she found Ellen at work, was seized with the most inordinate desire to put her fair shoulder to the wheel. Mr. Holcombe resisted her entreaties for some time, as he could not bear the idea of this his beautiful young daughter working for her living; but it became equally painful to see her straitened for means which he

could not furnish her, and he yielded to her wish; and as he saw her returning each day to her home, so bright and full of the simple incidents of the day, so ready to take her share of the household cares, and to grace the humble fireside by her mirthful spirits, when he saw all this, and compared her with those young girls who were only satisfied when seeking their happiness in scenes of insatiable and reckless gaiety, he concluded that in times like the then present, the mind and energies must have a vent, and if it was found in some suitable and regular employment, it restrained it either from undue excitement or despondency.

His full reconciliation to the condition of things came on the day when Mary received her first pay. Her delight as she childishly displayed the big roll of notes, and spoke grandiloquently of the "fruits of her labors," and the untimely fall of those fruits when she returned from her shopping expedition, with presents for each member of the family and none of her own many wants supplied; but her capacity for enjoyment was fully filled, and her father was satisfied.

Old Mammy still clung to the fallen fortunes of the family, though through increasing feebleness, so far as assistance in the household was concerned, her office was almost a sinecure. Uncle Bob having disposed of "the things" satisfactorily to Aunt Ailsie and her husband, had joined his wife in Richmond. And though the support of the two old servants weighed heavily enough upon the depleted purse of their master, there was not one of the family who would not have denied themselves to the utmost to prevent the faithful old couple from suspecting the fact; and it was touching

to see them trying to keep up a remnant of the form and state of the past under present changes; and when those changes became so palpable as no longer to admit of a cover, old Uncle Bob would seek an audience in the street, to whom he would detail the past splendors of Rose Hill.

In spite of losses and crosses, anxieties and poverty, the humble little home in Richmond was a happy one. Every now and then, John, now grown to manhood, boasting a beard and a sweetheart, would rush in on them like a refreshing breeze on a warm day, and then off again to see "the girls;" or old friends and new ones would hunt them out in their seclusion, and go away enraptured with the simple beauty of the fireside graced by cheerful hospitality and contentment under altered fortunes.

Soon after his last interview with Mary, Captain Williams had been ordered, with the portion of the command to which he was attached, to the South, without having time to claim the fulfilment of her promise given on that sad day in the cottage by the road-side; but he wrote to her, entreating her with eloquence such as only true lovers can use, to confirm her words and give him the consolation in his exile of knowing that upon his return he might claim her as all his own. Her answer was perfectly characteristic of the child-woman whose earliest essay of the heart had been rudely crushed by fate, and who out of it conceived a doubt of herself and her feelings which led her to fear to trust herself, judging of her nature rather from the constraint put upon it by circumstances than from its own earnest trustfulness and truthfulness. I give an extract from her letter:

". . . Dear friend, forgive me that I fear to trust myself under a promise so sacred and binding as that you wish me to make. When I met you that sad day, just after we lost our home, your words fell so comfortingly upon my sore heart that I felt as if it would be the greatest comfort to me to have your strong heart to lean upon in all the troubles of life, to have the right to claim your love and sympathy as all my own. But I am such a foolish, susceptible, fickle little thing, that now that my mind and heart have reacted from the misery of that time, I feel more independent of the love and tenderness you then offered me, more disposed to be a child a little longer, to devote myself to Papa and Mamma, who without vanity I think would be very lonely without me; and then, dear Mr. Williams, my feeling for you seems to sink into such insignificance beside your great, noble love to me, that I feel almost inclined to say it does not exist at all, though I know that when I compare you with any other man in the world you gain by it. I know that I admire and confide in you more than in any human being except Papa; yet I am so the creature of impulse, I am so taken by a mere outside show, that I should be in misery all the time for fear I should find myself mistaken, and have to blast your hopes after having allowed you to build them upon my fickle promise.

"I know, dear Mr. Williams, that this indecision is very contemptible and unworthy of me; but please don't despise me for it. Remember, if I am nearly twenty years old I am only a child after all, and try and judge me as leniently as you can." . . .

Mr. Williams sat with this letter in his hand a long time, reading it over and over again. Mary's hand-

writing was peculiar, and its very peculiarities seemed to him a part of herself. He remembered so well how when she was a child he had tried to change the little cramped letters to free, clear characters, more in unison with herself, and what laughs they had had over the failures. But now every little irregular mark was a part of herself, and he would not have changed one of them for the world. He read the letter first sadly, disappointedly, but with each repetition his brow cleared, and at last a smile broke over his face, and with a boyish impulse, showing the freshness of romance in the matured man, he put the letter next his heart, laughed and blushed as if some one else had witnessed the significant action, then sat down to answer it.

. . . "No danger, my dear child, of my despising you. I am a fool, perhaps, but I find everything you do at once established as the standard of right in my eyes; and so I even think you are wise here. I would not be the owner of a promise from you which could for one instant burden your dear heart, nor, dearly as I love you, desolate as my future would be without you, would I desire to take you to the heart where your image reigns so alone unless I felt that you preferred me to all the world. I am a very miser of your love, and cannot let any one else have a part of it, though, as I told you before, I do not dare aspire to the bounteous love from you which I delight to lavish upon you. It is only after years of tenderness, when your heart shall have grown into mine, when as my wife you know what my love is, that I hope to see yours grow and develop to its full stature. So, darling, bright star of my hope, don't think of me as an incubus upon your heart but love me a little as your oldest, best friend." . . .

CHAPTER XXXII.

"The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year,
Of wailing winds, and naked woods, and meadows brown and sear."
BRYANT.

IT was a cold, bleak day in December, such a day as precedes a fall of snow, when the gusty, stormy north-east wind seems to be trying with ill-tempered intent to drive winter with all of its harshness and rigor into the very vitals.

But in vain did it try its strength upon the fair young pedestrian who so bravely defied it. Now for a moment turning her back to allow her draperies to resume their proper places, and now going laughingly forward, old Boreas, with all his ill-temper, only painted her cheek of a deeper glow, and blew into rich confusion the masses of golden hair which escaped all confinement in the struggle. He only so tossed about the flowing skirts as to bring into view the delicate little foot with its arched instep, which even a coarse leather shoe of clumsy proportions could not disfigure.

At least so thought a young officer who, catching sight of her, and laughing to himself at the unequal contest between anything so fair and fragile and the old thunderer who has ruled the elements so many thousand years. Hurrying after her, he soon came up with her, and speaking with the familiarity of an old acquaintance, he said:

"Why, young lady, where is the wind blowing you to this morning?"

"Blowing me nowhere; I am having a regular fight with it to go my own way, and the victory was just in the balance when you come up and turn the scale in my favor." And she took his offered arm, adding as she did so: "You strong men are right good institutions in the storms of life; we can get along very well in the sunshine."

"Thank you. But I am a luxury that won't agree to be kept for storms alone," said her companion laughing, as he glanced admiringly at her glowing face. "I was just going up to ask if you were invited to the sociable at the Bakers' to-night, and if I might have the pleasure of going with you."

"Yes indeed, I am going; it is to be a real peace entertainment — white sugar for the tea. I haven't seen such a thing for six months," said Mary.

"Well now for the second part of our business. Are you going to allow your humble servant to act as your escort?" said the young man.

"Well, Mr. Inskeep, I shall have to take that matter into consideration," said Mary, shaking her head doubtfully. "Upon certain agreements between us two, perhaps I may. In the first place, you are not to think because I let you take care of me there and back that I am to talk to you all the time; and next, you are to help me to decline singing the entire evening; and lastly, you are to sing with me when I want you to, and without me whenever you are asked."

"You young tyrant, you!" said the young man, laughing; "you lay down your laws with an arbitrary exactness I never saw excelled."

"Well, just say whether or not I may accept you; you know the terms," said the young lady.

"Only withdraw the last; don't make me sing whenever I am asked and I accept," was the answer.

"You seem to take it for granted," said she banteringly, "that you will be wildly sought after as a musician, when perhaps after all no one will want to hear you. No, I can't change my terms."

"Well, then, I suppose I must accept. I certainly am not going to give up the privilege of taking you there," said Mr. Inskeep.

"Great privilege, to be sure," said Mary, with an immense show of contempt for the weakness of mankind. "How does your likeness of General Lee progress?"

"Pshaw! I'm disgusted with it. I made him as red as a peony, looking for all the world as if he had suddenly fallen into dissipated habits. And in attempting to alter it I have utterly ruined the whole thing, so I cut a slit in my canvas and threw it away."

"Are you not ashamed of yourself, Mr. Inskeep? You always do that. This is at least the third promising picture I have known you begin and end in the same way."

"Well, I know it. The fact is I want encouragement and sympathy; I want a wife to give it."

Mary turned away suddenly, as if this was an old channel dug long ago and travelled frequently, and which she wanted to avoid.

"I am afraid I am late," she said; "Major Brewster can't bear us to be after nine. Let's hurry on."

"If I had some one to sympathise with me and appreciate my efforts," said her companion, continuing the conversation with dogged determination, "I might meet with a success worth something; but I go on by

myself and get discouraged and disgusted, and undo the work of months in an hour."

"You talk as weakly as a woman," said Mary impatiently. "A man ought to be above such small auxinaries as sympathy and encouragement. A man ought to be able to stand alone."

"But I don't want to stand alone. I want—"

What he wanted Mary did not seem very anxious to hear, as she suddenly abandoned the support of his arm and darted forward to meet Ellen Randolph, who was not able to account for her enthusiastic reception.

A few minutes' walk brought the trio to the door of the establishment on Main Street sacred to the use of the female clerks.

"What time will you go to-night?" said Mr. Inskeep, as they parted.

"About eight o'clock, I expect, if I go at all," answered Mary, indifferently.

"If you go at all!" said he, surprised.

"Yes, I may change my mind, but you can come and see," said the arbitrary young beauty as she followed Ellen into the house.

Mary's fears of being late were not well founded, as upon their entrance at the door of the office they found a number of ladies all clustered together in different parties about the long room, or sitting either at or on the writing tables which occupied the space around the wall, all laughing and talking merrily. A bright-eyed little woman, neither very young nor yet middle-aged, came eagerly to meet them as they made their appearance, accompanied by a young girl with light flaxen hair curling in her neck, and soft blue eyes rather sad in expression.

"Ah, girls, here you are at last!" said the first-named lady. "I have just been telling this child that she must not sing those melancholy ditties over her work, it is bad for her and for us; it has been, 'Who will care for mother now?' for three days, and I have just promised her if she will give us 'Dixie,' in her soft, low voice, I will not only care for 'Mother,' but the whole family."

The young girl laughed, not sensitively either, as the pleasant face carried no ill-feeling with the criticism, and a strong, kindly arm was about her waist, and she knew it was only intended as a little bantering out of her disposition to melancholy.

"Very well," she said softly, "I'll try Dixie to-day, on your account solely. I did not know any one heard me at all, if I was even conscious of singing."

It is a curious sight, that Commissary Examining Department, a real business-looking room, lined with tables which are covered with formidable piles of documents ready for examination or in process of examination, ink-stands, ink-sponges, pens, pencils, paper-knives, and all the paraphernalia of business, and those unbusiness-looking clerks, with hair in curl-papers, and little coquettish bows of ribbon adornments about in spots, and white ruffled aprons. There are one, two, three, perhaps more, older ladies, with kind faces, who seem to take a motherly supervision over the young ones. Mary Holcombe calls them the "mothers of the maids." There is a good deal of gossip going on, as will be the case when either men or women are gathered together, for I deny that it is confined to the one sex; a party of gentlemen enjoy a little of the chit-chat of society with as much zest as do ladies. But there is

one subject on the tapis where I must admit women have the monopoly, the prolific subject of dress!

"Oh, girls," says one bright-eyed girl, "have you seen the calicoes at Levy's — beautiful calicoes at only thirty dollars a yard!"

"And I gave fifty for mine!" exclaims another.

"Yes," says another, "and by the time we get to the store these will be fifty too. I wish there was some way to keep prices down. I wonder how a brick on the merchant's head would answer."

"We'll let you try it," laughed Mary Holcombe.

"And, my dear," said the first speaker, "Madame Virgine has received a fashion-book through the lines. You never saw such frights as the new bonnets are — actually without crowns in them!"

"No!" "Pshaw!" "Impossible!" from various sources.

"Actually, yes, without crowns, and little bits of things like head-dresses."

"I think our big ones are a great deal prettier. And," said one patriotic young lady, smoothing down her homespun dress, "we don't care to adopt Yankee fashions; the Southern Confederacy can set her own fashions."

"I don't know about that," said a tall girl with a magnificent figure; "I would like to have the fashions, I confess; it's horrible to have to dress so outlandishly as we do. I should be ashamed to be taken prisoner."

There was a general outcry at this.

"The idea!" "Ashamed of the Yankees!" "I would like them to see that we were perfectly independent of them." And one girl expressed it as her wish that the South hereafter might have her own manufactories

and refuse to trade with the North at all. "Let us be independent of them in every respect," said she with emphasis.

"Nine o'clock, ladies," said Major Brewster, making his appearance at the door, and instantly there was a hurrying to seats and a getting-out of papers for about five minutes, and then the room was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop; the gossipping ladies were at once transformed into diligent clerks. Soon the sound of tapping on the tables broke the silence; it was a woman calculating her accounts in true womanlike way, counting on her fingers.

"How much is nine times seven?" whispered Ellen's next-door neighbor.

"Sixty-three," answered Ellen in the same tone.

"Ah, thank you," said her companion, a middle-aged lady. "You see the advantage of being young. I have had too much time in which to forget my multiplication-table, but you at my right hand are almost as good as personal knowledge."

"Mr. Carlton," said Mary Holcombe, stopping a gentleman who was hurrying past, "what was the proper issue of bacon last May? I don't think my man issues right, and I find a mistake of three hundred dollars in his account current."

"I wonder if it isn't your mistake, Miss Holcombe?" said the gentleman, seating himself beside her and smiling at the fair young face puzzling itself over issues and receipts and accounts current.

"No indeed," said Mary laughing, "he is as dishonest as he can be; he receipts for one thousand pounds of bacon and only issues seven hundred that I can find. See, I have called his attention to it," and she handed her brief to him for inspection.

He read: — "How is it you receive one thousand pounds of bacon and only issue seven hundred? Your account current is all wrong. Explain how it is that in January you receipt for three thousand dollars, and up to the close of these papers you only disburse two thousand and seven hundred."

Mr. Carlton laughed as he said:

"That's right, call him to account. You ladies are the best clerks in the world for scenting out a fraud; just put one of you on the track of a dishonest man and you will work yourselves to death. You would make first-rate detectives."

"Oh yes," said Mary, "the honest Commissaries are so very stupid. I get so tired of the long lines of figures. It is so refreshing to find a good dishonest man; he puts a little variety into our lives. I feel so important when I am calling him to account for his cheats."

The day wore on in diligent work, and at three o'clock Major Brewster again made his appearance.

"Ladies," he said, "I suppose that none of you have forgotten that Christmas is approaching, though I suppose none of you counted on your holiday as beginning so long beforehand; but the Commissary-General, in consideration of the fact that you are, many of you, heads of families, and have some preparations to make for that time, has ordered that your month's salary shall be issued to-day, and we will not expect you here again for two weeks." There was a general clapping of hands and little jubilant expressions of delight through the room, which interrupted the address for a few minutes. Seeing there was still something more to come, however, silence was at last restored,

and the Major went on: "Being desirous of giving a Christmas treat to my faithful clerks, I want you all to return after Christmas, with a cup and saucer and spoon, and I will have a large boiler of *real* coffee for your entertainment."

This was a delightful surprise, and the Major was not left in any doubt of the fact. There was then a general confusion in the room, putting up papers and getting ready for the holiday, after which the whole party adjourned to the paymaster's department and received their piles of new crisp notes which meant so very little.

As Ellen and Mary walked home together, Ellen was surprised to find her cousin in a thoughtful mood.

"What are you thinking of, Mary?" she asked.

"Old times and new, I believe, Nell," was the answer.

"A dangerous employment. We had better live in the present until the war is over; it don't do to look forward or backward," said Ellen.

"I know that very well, but I could not help thinking of our old Christmas times at Rose Hill. Do you remember the one just after Mamma came to us first?"

"Indeed I do," said Ellen. "I wonder if we will ever live over the past?"

"Never!" said Mary; "no time could be like past times without dear old Rose Hill. But I was thinking of the children, Eddy and Cousin Cynthia's children; it seems so dreadful for them never to know what the happiness of the past was. I don't believe they, any of them, know the taste of candy, or have any idea of toys. Oh, if we could just get up a Christmas-tree for them!"

"Poor little things!" said Ellen, "it would make them happy."

"Suppose we all put our heads and funds together and get up something like a Christmas dinner and a Christmas-tree," suggested Mary with a little hesitation, as if she feared the extravagance of the proposition would be met with disapprobation.

"Oh, it would be very delightful! wouldn't it?" said Ellen, "an oasis in the desert of our lives."

"Only think of the pleasure of a real Christmas party," said Mary, gathering enthusiasm from the evident acquiescence of her cousin.

"Suppose we talk to Aunt Annie about it before we go any further. I feel only doubtful whether we have any right to gratify ourselves in this way when our army is on half rations, and everything looks so gloomy for our cause."

"Well," said Mary, "I think that is a very good plan; but really I don't see any harm in it. We don't intend to commit any great extravagance, only put everything we have together, and spend the day together, and have some candy for the children."

Aunt Annie was consulted, and not only acquiesced in the arrangement, but removed the doubts as to the propriety of the step.

"I don't at all approve," she said, "of these balls and parties — it seems heartless enough; but for a simple family gathering and being as cheerful as we can, I think is a first-rate idea, even if we do have to put ourselves on half rations for some days after. I believe it will do us good, put a little spirit into us again."

So it was agreed upon finally, unless the two mammas objected, which was not likely since Aunt Annie thought it a good move.

The two cousins parted with a kiss at the corner of the street, and Ellen Randolph walked soberly along, while Mary, as if the attraction of gravitation existed in quadruple quantity in the home towards which she was approaching, sped onward like a fairy-leaf before the wind. Coming to a brick house with a yard in front, she looked up smilingly at one of the windows, and catching a glimpse of the bright laughing face of a child there, she clapped her hands, and cried out, "I knew you would be there, you darling boy, you!"

She was answered by a glad shout, and two other faces appeared, bidding welcome, the one bearded and bronzed but with the tenderness of a woman in it, and the other soft and gentle as a child's, but with the shadow of years creeping over it.

This was the one event of the day to Mary. If Eddy had failed to appear at the window, watching for her, she would have been sure there was something the matter; but he never failed, it was quite as much of an event to him as to his sister.

Running into the house, the joyous girl received as warm a welcome as if she had been away for months.

"And what kept you so long?" said her father; "dinner has been waiting for an hour at least, and our sumptuous repast is burnt to a cinder, I expect."

"I had to go to see Aunt Annie on *business*," said Mary, with her most important air.

"Well, let's hear what the important business is," said Mr. Holcombe, laughing at her manner.

"It can't be discussed at present," said Mary, glancing at Eddy; "affairs at this season of the year always have to be very private. I never knew anything when I was a child."

"Oh, I understand," said Mr. Holcombe, taking the hint, and the subject was dropped. Before another could be started, the door opened and Mammy made her appearance with a dish with some species of meat on it, it matters not what, and Uncle Bob followed with a dish of potatoes.

It would have been ludicrous if it had not had a touch of pathos in it, to see the grand flourish of trumpets these two faithful old Caleb Balderstones brought to bear as a cover to the lackings of a scanty repast. Mammy had on her most stately turban and an apron of immaculate whiteness, while her coadjutor graced the occasion in his best-preserved suit of blue cotton, with a waiter's apron around his waist.

A description of the room in which we find our exiles will not be amiss. It had formerly served as the parlor to the mansion, and the space between the windows was still filled up by a long mirror with heavy gilding, resting upon a marble slab; a rich chandelier hung from the ceiling. But these fragments of other days looked strangely enough when brought into contrast with the scanty furniture of the room; it consisted of a few chairs, a piano, and a round table now covered with the simple paraphernalia of the dinner-table, set out on a delicate white cloth. No carpet was on the floor, the boards of which were as white as snow; midway of the room and extending its entire length was a paper screen, or more properly a partition cutting the room in two, in the centre of which was a space filled up by a white curtain tastefully draped; it was half looped up at present, and a glimpse could be caught of a neat bed and other simple furniture of a private apartment. So this one room served as sleep-

ing apartment, dining-room, parlor, and sitting-room. It was a change, truly; and it was strange to see this family sitting down to their frugal meal without an allusion to the change, but with a seasoning for their simple food of bright contented spirits, which defied fate to do its worst; and the two old servants standing behind their chairs with humble mien, and hearts where love prompted service. It was a scene for a painter.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"And Belgium's capital had gathered there
Her beauty and her chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men."

BYRON.

PERHAPS the handsomest portion of the handsome city of Richmond is the eastern end of Clay Street, where in olden time the wealth and aristocracy of the metropolis built their residences, and where the stately old buildings still stand as monuments of the past.

It is true that the massive walls have been dressed anew in a more modern fashion, that painters and carvers have been employed with doubtful taste to modernise their styles; but in vain: the indelible stamp of antiquity is still upon them, they yet bear upon their time-honored faces the date of a hundred years ago, which all the paint and carving has failed to obliterate.

Ask that old citizen and he will point you to the former residences of the Wickhams, the Lees, the Marshalls, the Amblers, the Nicholases, and the Brockenbroughs, all old and honored Virginia names. And as the city has increased its population, it has still spared the beautiful grounds attached to these old houses, filled with substantial and luxuriant shrubbery. Roses which have been growing and clambering for so many years that they must have frames to support their enormous height, unless, as is often the case, they have been planted close to the walls of the houses, where they cling and bloom as luxuriantly as in their first youth.

Then there are arbors covered with yellow jessamine, and picturesque old ruins covered with ivy; the flower-beds in quaint devices, bordered with the well-trimmed box-edging; the great trees of dark arbor-vitae mingling with the glossy-leaved magnolia. The old conservatories, of dimensions almost equal to a good-sized dwelling-room, against the glass walls of which japonicas of every shade, Cape jessamines, azaleas, daphnes, carnations, fuchsias and geraniums wave their varied hues. At the end of this street the city breaks off with a precipitation almost startling; there are no suburbs of straggling low-built and low-bred houses, at the doors of which men and women of doubtful respectability lounge, and where ragged urchins deface the scene with the soil and grime of poverty.

I have said the city breaks off suddenly, and this is literally the case, for about ten yards from the front entrance of the stateliest old building on this stately old street, art ceases her operations, as it were on the instant, and nature, as if tired of the dull uniformity of this, her sister and her rival, puts a period to her work by a precipice of considerable height; and looking down, the gazer sees a ravine with a stream running through it, a meadow with cattle feeding upon it, and beyond, hills covered with trees, and a dark line of pine woods as the background. It is a sudden emergence from the city with all the beauty and polish which art can give, into the country where nature reigns sovereign.

It is to the last-named house at the extreme end of the street that I would particularly invite the attention of the reader.

A handsome dark-gray stuccoed building, opening

directly from its wide front portico on the street. Standing as it does at the corner, a full view is presented to the passer-by of the entire residence, with its verandahs and beautiful grounds extending back half a square. It looks like the residence of a prosperous, thrifty man, with sufficient of the good things of this life to justify him in collecting the comforts and luxuries of existence about him, and with no desire to make a useless parade of his wealth. This unpretending dwelling with its citizen-like appearance is the residence of the President of the Confederate States. It is here he holds his simple court, and here he finds all the rest his unenviable position affords him; and it is here on this December night, when the stars are blinking in the clear cold sky, that crowds are hurrying to the President's levee. And we too join the stream, and are borne upon it into a wide hall brilliantly lighted, where the masses of people seem to have congregated. As the press is almost impenetrable, we draw back a moment, hoping to be able to catch an opportunity of wedging our persons into some kind gap which will doubtless open for our special benefit, and while we pause, a familiar laugh falls upon our ear. We turn quickly and find ourselves in the neighborhood of friends, for at our side is a gentleman whose limping gait and gray clothes tell of wounds in the service of the Confederacy, and looking up we recognise Captain Holcombe, and on his arm his fair, sweet wife. Behind them is Mary, all smiles and happiness, escorted by Mr. Inskeep, whose very step speaks the pride he feels in his fair charge; and still following on is Ellen Randolph, looking very well satisfied as she leans on the arm of her German friend, Mr. Hautman; and next

we have John, laughing and joking with a brown-eyed girl who accompanies him and evidently appreciates his jokes very keenly. No time like the present, say we, and wedge ourselves in along with this party, and so into an ante-room, where a gentleman in the uniform of a Colonel asks our names and undertakes to usher us into the presence and to the acquaintance of the President.

We are somewhat awed at first entering the reception-room by the blaze of light and the blaze of uniforms, as officers of all grades throng the apartment; but we hear the voice of our master of ceremonies murdering our names most atrociously, and find ourselves grasped by the hand of a gentleman in citizen's dress with a gentle sadness of countenance which at once attracts and touches our hearts. It is President Davis.

There is an almost parental benignity in his greeting, particularly when his eye falls upon the fair girlish face and figure of Mary Holcombe, whose simple dress of white muslin, made with low neck and short sleeves, increases greatly her youthfulness of appearance. The President evidently fancies her a pretty child, for instead of giving her the formal greeting he had done to the others, he lays his hand on her head as he says:

"My child, I am very glad to see you."

It is life in its midnight greeting the golden dawn. It is the attraction which the old man, worn with service and sinking under the burdens and heat of the day, feels to glad, beautiful youth, the retrospect of his own.

In a moment the crowd behind presses us onward, and we are glad to take refuge in a recess and look around us.

There are many faces of note in the crowd, some well-known to us and others seen for the first time. First and foremost in the public eye is the old warrior General Lee, with his grand face and figure, striving in genial conversation to win his mind from the cares and anxieties which daily gather thicker and heavier around him. He forms quite the centre of a group. The stout dark man speaking so earnestly, and whose rather sombre face lights up so wonderfully with a smile, is the Hon R. M. T. Hunter, the former distinguished representative from Virginia in the United States Senate, and now the confidential friend of President Davis. Beyond him, and listening intently to his words, is Hon. Charles Conrad, of Louisiana, former Secretary of War in Taylor's administration; and there, and there, and there we see Generals Longstreet, McLaws, and Kershaw, besides other lesser lights which are making a praiseworthy effort to shine, and succeeding well considering the fact that after all they are but tapers!

Amongst the ladies of the company there is considerable beauty, though it is beauty under great disadvantages. If a New York lady of the *ton* were to be dropped into the midst of the company, she would doubtless "die with laughter" at the *outre* styles of dressing; though occasionally a fortunate female has succeeded in securing through the lines a costume sufficiently *a la mode*, which but makes more conspicuous the peculiarities in those of her companions. There were dresses of every fashion and texture; some with the wealth of other days hanging about them still, and some with the marks of the new Confederacy; heavy silks which in vain try to look new, and plain stiff home-spun unmitigatedly Southern.

Mary Holcombe is, as usual, the light which attracts the moths; she is the centre of an admiring throng, with whom she is jesting and laughing with her usual unaffected infectious merriment, to the infinite pleasure of her companions, if we except her escort, Mr. Inskeep, who keeps his post beside her, jealously claiming this right, while his fine face is overshadowed by a moody cloud, and he vents his displeasure by twisting his moustache after the manner of his sex.

"Were you at Miss Malden's wedding the other night?" asked Mary of one of the gentlemen.

"Yes, quite a brilliant affair," was the answer.

"Yes, as far as gas-lights went; but the crowd behaved dreadfully — perfectly shockingly for a church — laughing and talking, some of them standing on the backs of the pews."

"The bride looked very prettily," said another; "I quite envied Colonel Judson."

"That reminds me of an amusing story Jennie tells on herself," said Mary. "You gentlemen know — or rather you don't know either: how should you? But it is a fact that a bridal veil is such an expensive item now-a-days, the very plainest, shortest, and skimpiest costing about three thousand dollars. And as a matter to be inferred, very few brides in these war-times can afford to indulge in the luxury; and still, notwithstanding this, for an evening wedding one must have a veil. Now you needn't laugh! No bride can be happily married in the evening without a bridal veil; I assert it as a fact known to my whole sex. But owing to this enormous expense which puts a veil beyond the reasonable expectations of ordinary mortals, various treasured pieces of tulle, laid away in lavender for the sake of

the tender recollections they recall, have been brought out. And I know that the veil Jennie Malden wore the other night had officiated at seven bridals."

"How absurd!" "Impossible!" "You're joking." "Ha! ha! ha!" "He! he! he!" was echoed from the various personages among the listeners.

"No such thing," said Mary, "it is all perfectly true. I had it from Jennie myself. The veil in which she was married served in the first instance about six years ago, and it was resurrected this winter, and has actually hidden the blushes of six brides! But the best part of the story is yet to come. Jennie says the day after their marriage her husband came to her and said: 'Jennie, I always want to retain a recollection of you as you looked last night, when you took my arm to go into the church. And I want you to give me that wreath and veil; I shall keep it among my treasures, and get it out when we grow to be old people.' Imagine his surprise when Jennie said very seriously: 'That is impossible, as it was borrowed, and I sent it home this morning.'"

"What a crusher to sentiment!" laughed one of the gentlemen.

"I should have sued for a divorce on the instant," said Mr. Inskeep.

"And would have obtained it, doubtless, without any opposition from your wife," said the young lady quickly.

"I often wonder," said Mr. Brown, one of the party, "how these incidents of the war will sound ten years after its close."

"Now do you really think," said Mary, "that the war ever will be over?"

"Certainly I do."

"Well, I feel as if we were going on fighting till all the best men in the country are killed off, and—"

"What a melancholy prognostication for a young lady of your appearance!" said a voice beside her, and she turned and found General Lee.

"Well, General," she said, laughing as she shook hands with him, "do you think the war ever will be over?"

"Oh, I hope so, some of these days; and there can be no danger of our being whipped so long as we have so many brave women. Why, I got a letter a few days ago from a lady living in a certain town in Virginia offering herself and her company as soldiers. She said that they had been drilling regularly, and were now ready for the field."

"Not really?" said Mary.

"Yes, really."

"And are you going to take them?" asked Mary.

"Well," said the General, "in these scarce times we are not apt to decline a company of well-drilled soldiers. I think my influence might get you a lieutenancy. Young gentlemen, what do you think would be a good uniform? Dress Miss Holcombe now by the help of your imaginations in the most becoming costume your fancies can suggest, and I shall adopt it for my fair Amazons."

"But I decline," said Mary, laughing; "I never could stand fire in the world."

"Then I'll put you to hold the trenches."

"But I cannot stand mud any better than I can fire," objected the unwilling conscript.

"Ah," said General Lee, laughing, "you won't do for my company then, for in our service you may escape

the shots but you can't escape the mud. '*Palma non sine pulvere*' is the motto of the army."

"Mr. Inskeep," said Mary Holcombe, as they left the house to return home, "I am never going with you anywhere again."

"Why not?" asked that gentleman, much surprised.

"Because you make yourself and myself both absurd by your conduct," said the young lady, with the little tyrannical, pettish manner which the consciousness of power over a man whom she does not love gives to a woman, even the best of the sex.

"How?" asked Mr. Inskeep.

"Oh well, I shan't explain; but it isn't the first time it has annoyed me."

"I know what you mean, I think," said the gentleman, after a moment's silence. "You mean that I show my absurd jealousy whenever you talk to any one else."

"Yes I do, and I have told you over and over again that you have no right to be jealous of me."

"I wish I had," said Mr. Inskeep, impetuously.

"And you never will have," said Mary.

"How can you speak so certainly?" asked the young man, turning upon her almost fiercely. "I have watched you keenly and jealously, as you say, for eighteen months past, and I know you do not care for any of those butterflies which play around you, and so long as that is the case I don't see why you may not love me yet. I have as much to offer as most men. They tell me I am handsome, and I know I am. You tell me I have more than ordinary gifts, though I throw them away because I have no incentive to success. Is it no quickener to your heart that you hold my future

in your hand, that your mere word can make me what you will, that with you beside me I would work on without weariness to the goal, because it would honor you, raise you, that men would point to you as the wife of the man who had achieved fame?"

They were passing through a retired part of the town, and the moon, which was just above their heads, shone its brightest upon the young man's face as he stopped in their walk and stood facing the young girl, who looked up almost frightened at his unexpected excitement. He had spoken so rapidly that she had had no opportunity to stop him until now; but as he paused, she said, with no remaining irritation in her voice:

"Mr. Inskeep, it is not only useless for you to continue to indulge in this kind of thing, but utterly wrong; you ruin yourself and wrong me."

"Why is it useless? How do you know it is? How can you be certain? Am I hideous? Is there anything repulsive in my appearance? Am I an idiot that you say so positively that you never will love me? Oh! why have I anything? Why did God endow me with genius and the love of the beautiful if He does not give me the power to gain the one thing which can make my life bearable?"

There was a reckless desperation in his manner which awed her and brought out her true character from the mere dross of woman's vanity, made her ashamed of the unworthy exhibition of temper and power over a man whose only fault was in loving her too blindly; so she answered very humbly, while the moonlight shone upon eyes full of tears of regret:

"Mr. Inskeep, I know it is utterly despicable in me to treat you as I do. I don't know what makes me do

it, except that I am a woman, and in no way better than the rest of my sex. The sense of power is a dangerous thing for a woman. You ask me why I am so certain that I can never love you? I don't know any better than you do. It is true that you have more to offer than most men, than any man I know; but I cannot hold out any hope from my present feelings that all this will ever move my heart. I feel the deepest interest in you."

"Pshaw!" said Mr. Inskeep, impatiently, "I don't want your interest. Please don't fall into that commonplace strain; I shall expect next that you will tell me that you love me like a brother."

Mary could not help smiling; it had been on her lips.

"Don't you want me to be a sister to you, since I cannot be anything else?" said she gently.

"No! You a sister? You might as well ask the sun to turn to ice at once. I want you for my wife, and am never going to give up the hope that I will have you until you are married to another man, and before that day comes I hope I may be dead."

As Mary looked up at him and realised the completeness of the man in all of those attributes to which she believed herself peculiarly susceptible, she wondered at her own insensibility. Could it be that she wore a coat of mail against any new sentiment of the heart; that, as she had once told Mr. Williams, her heart was dead within her? No, she knew it was not; she felt it too sensibly, and knew it was living and hoping in a happy future, and as susceptible to impressions as it had ever been. One other solution of the mystery occurred to her, but this she dared not face; and the blood mounted consciously to her face as she turned hastily away in the direction of her home.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"For what is worth in anything,
But so much money as 'twill bring?"—Butler.

It was the day before Christmas, and as is so frequently the case at that season, the ground was covered with new-fallen snow which glittered and sparkled in the sunlight. It was still early morning, and the work of clearing the pavements had scarce begun, though here and there a householder, more enterprising than his fellows, might be seen shoveling the snow off in masses to the sides of the walks, where it lay piled up and shorn of its purity by occasional evidences of its contact with the base earth. The air was intensely cold, and every now and then the shovellers would pause in their work to clap their hands; and draymen indulged in strange gymnastics as they drove slowly along the streets, in order to keep the blood stirred in their veins; while the blue-nosed pedestrians, their feet crunching through the frozen surface of the snow, hurried along at a rapid rate, striving to increase their inward fires by the supplies of oxygen they were imbibing from the crisp wintry air.

From the door of the house in which the Holcombes had their residence, four ladies issued, their faces with a genuine holiday glow upon them which bespoke some of the frolicsome tendency so inseparable from the season in peace times, and budding here in a besieged city, and in spite of the booming of the death-dealing cannon falling upon their ears at intervals. They were Mrs.

Mason, Mrs. Holcombe, Mary, and Ellen, and Mr. Holcombe followed them to the door, laughing at the preparations for the shopping expedition.

"Don't you think," suggested he banteringly, as he pointed to the immense rolls of bank-notes in the hands of Mary and Ellen, who had constituted themselves treasurers on the occasion — "don't you think you had better hire a dray to carry your money for you, and a small boy will be able to bring back your purchases?"

"Now, no insinuations, Papa," said Mary saucily, "or you won't be invited to our Christmas party."

"At least, my dear child," said Mr. Holcombe, "take a military guard along to protect the wealth you carry. How much is it in all?"

"Two thousand five hundred dollars," said Mary.

"Two thousand five hundred dollars!" exclaimed he. "Not to be spent on our dinner to-morrow?"

"Yes, and some candy for the children. Remember it is the contributions of four families, and Ellen and myself extra."

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" exclaimed Mr. Holcombe; "and what are we to do the rest of the month, until pay-day comes again?"

"Oh well, we will put ourselves on half rations," said Mrs. Mason; "the children must see a Christmas. It will be nothing like the old times, but still it will give them some faint idea of what it is."

"Well, wilful women will have their own way," said Mr. Holcombe, shrugging his shoulders, "but I really think it is a great piece of extravagance to spend twenty-five hundred dollars on one dinner in these times."

"These are really the only times when it would be at all

admissible," said Mrs. Mason. "But it is not altogether for the dinner. First we are to get a barrel of flour, to be divided between us, and that you know is twelve hundred dollars; then a ham of bacon costs one hundred and seventy-five dollars, a pound of pepper costs three hundred, and everything in a like proportion."

"At that rate your twenty-five hundred won't go very far," said Mr. Holcombe, laughing.

"It is the united wealth of the family," said Mrs. Holcombe, "so it must go as far as we can make it," and off they started for the market.

It did not look very much like starvation, being pretty well stocked with "flesh, fish and fowl," as well as vegetables of all kinds.

"What do you ask for your turkeys?" said Ellen, stopping at a stall where a number of them were displayed in tempting array.

"Well, 'pends pun the size," said the woman. "This here small one you kin have for seventy-five dollars, and agin this big one is one hundred and twenty-five; they ranges between them two prices."

The money was unrolled and a medium-sized turkey purchased for one hundred dollars.

"Oh, I wonder if we can get some oysters!" said Mary, looking longingly at the tempting delicacies.

"Seventy-five dollars a gallon!" It was doubtful; necessaries must be attended to first.

The recital of the prices of the merest necessaries of life seems perfectly fabulous. There is no room for exaggeration, and our four ladies found that their preparations for Christmas must be conducted on the most frugal scale. The coveted candy, to give the children a taste of the luxury, had to be reduced to

one pound, for which they paid one hundred and fifty dollars. Sugar seventy-five dollars a pound, and eggs twenty-five and thirty dollars a dozen, apples five dollars a piece. It was well that a gradual ascent to this fearful condition of things had prepared the people for it, and that the every-day anxieties of life should have made them indifferent to such secondary considerations.

"Well, I suppose," said Ellen, regretfully looking at the almost exhausted roll of money in her hands, "we will have to make up in cedar and holly for all other deficiencies. Here the money is almost gone and not half the things purchased which seemed necessary."

"Well, it don't make any difference," said Mary; "we can have a nice time anyhow. In war-times people can't expect to have much. Wait until we gain our independence."

"Mr. Hautman promised to send a wagon-load of cedar," said Ellen, "and we can manage to fill up the tree with little matters which will please the children."

"Poor little things! happily, they don't know any better," said Mrs. Mason.

It was determined to have the entertainment at Mrs. Marshall's house, as it afforded more space than any of the other establishments; and when our party returned there, they found the cedars had arrived, and they were soon busy arranging the ornaments with as much elaboration as their limited means would allow, while the older ladies undertook the more substantial preparations.

The children were sent out of the way, and Mary Holcombe, Ellen, and Miss Mason, assisted by Mr.

Hautman and Mr. Inskeep, set up the tree and trimmed it. They hung long strings of white popped-corn in festoons from it, and little colored tarlatan bags of candy, rosy apples, and an occasional orange did their best to enliven the entertainment; but it was rather a meagre affair after all. The gentlemen improved matters by cutting ornaments out of gilt and colored paper, and Mr. Inskeep brought his talent to bear upon the occasion by painting some pretty little baskets, made out of simple card-board, while Mary Mason manufactured flowers out of tissue-paper.

"How does it look now?" said Mary, as she stood upon a step-ladder, from which elevation she had been arranging the different articles among the branches.

"Beautiful!" said Mr. Inskeep, with a fervor which made Mr. Hautman laugh as he said in a low tone:

"Meester Inskeep see only wone rose on de tree."

Mary jumped down, blushing as she did so, and looking very much as if she might be the "wone rose."

Mr. Inskeep, as usual, blind, deaf, and insensible to anything but her presence, failed to hear the whispered comment, and was by her side as soon as she reached the floor.

"There, let me do that," said he, taking from her hands the briery cedar which she was nervously trying to break to the detriment of her fingers.

"You think me perfectly useless, I believe," said Mary, laughing.

"No; but if I could direct it, you should live in the roses and be untouched by the thorns of life," whispered the gentleman, bending over her.

Mary tossed her head impatiently. Sentiment when it touches no kindred chord is such a heavy article,

and with all her good resolutions and her real esteem for Mr. Inskeep, it always made her impatient and restless when the enamored young man would inflict his eloquence of this nature upon her.

"Oh, please don't," she said involuntarily, and then looked at her finger as if it had been hurt; "these cedars are so briery."

"Eas it a spleenter?" asked Mr. Hautman, his eyes beaming with fun, and coming forward to look at the wound.

"Never mind, Mr. Hautman," said Mary, "I can get it out without help," and she deceitfully dug away at the pretended wound.

"De wune is not dare, Meess Holcome," said Mr. Hautman; "you make a meestake."

"Mr. Hautman," said Mary, quickly, "attend to your own wounds, and I will attend to mine."

Mr. Hautman for once was silenced by this vigorous carrying of the war into his own territories, and Ellen Randolph turned away blushing. At this moment, Mr. Inskeep, who had his eyes fixed upon Mary, was startled by a sudden change in her face. Every particle of blood forsook it, and her eyes, distended with surprise and fright, were fixed upon the door. Turning quickly to find the reason, he saw a pale shadow of manhood standing in it, with one arm extended, while the stump of the other was bound up with white bandages. At the same instant Ellen Randolph darted forward, exclaiming "Mr. Williams!" and Mary Holcombe came tumbling against him, and before he could catch her, down upon the floor in a dead faint.

All was confusion in a moment, and Mr. Inskeep found himself suddenly moved aside by the stranger,

who with a very assured manner lifted the exquisite head and kissed the white lips in an agitated, heartfelt manner, but so little as Mr. Inskeep would have done had he been so privileged, that the gentleman never thought of him as a lover — that pale, worn piece of a man. It was then a sudden awakening when Mary opened her eyes, and seeing who bent above her, said, sobbing and laughing in a breath:

"Oh, is it true? You are here! you are here! you are here!"

There was too much of the real genuine ring in the ecstatic sound not to send conviction to the heart of the miserable young man, who in one instant read the story of Mary's insensibility, his rejection and miserable future, and with a groan which sounded like the bursting of his heart, he rushed from the house.

It was a revelation too to the other two occupants of the room, who quietly did as they would be done by, and stole away without a word.

Shall we do the same, reader? No; we are either more privileged or less delicate, and we cannot quite tear ourselves from the sight. We see him, that poor, wounded, torn remnant of a man, but whose great heart is still untouched — we see him lift this tender, fragile, childish form from the ground with his one arm. We see her, with all her shyness lost in the suddenness of this return, in the shock of his great loss, put her two young arms around his neck as she says:

"Ah! back at last! And they shot you; oh! oh! oh! how could they do anything so cruel! Does it hurt you? Ah, if I had only gone with you they wouldn't have done it! But I will be arm and all to you now!"

And we hear him answer, all the manliness shaken out of his voice by illness and agitation:

"And, oh, can it be possible that you will really give yourself in the rich fulness of your nature to a poor cripple? I came to resign you."

"No, no, no!" cries Mary, "you need me ten thousand times more now than you ever did. You sha'n't give me up. If anything could make me satisfied about this," and with pretty tenderness she touches the poor mutilated stump, "it is that I may be able to repay you in some small degree for your long faithfulness and love."

He replies in his tremulous voice, which still vibrates with the music of perfect happiness:

"You are the richest earthly reward God could bestow upon a faithful man."

And now we go; but we return when Mr. Holcombe comes. We see those two approach him; she held tight within the clasp of his arm, and her face a perfect April shower of smiles and tears. And we see Captain Holcombe's astonishment as Mr. Williams put his treasure into her father's arms, and says:

"Give her to me! I ask a great deal; but she is willing to come, and I have loved her nearly all of her life."

And then the explanations which follow, during which the father holds his child, and at its end says:

"I thank God, my friend, that I can thus secure her happiness," and kissing her, he resigns her to her glad lover.

And then the rest of the family come in, and the explanations must be given again, though very briefly. And how everybody laughs, but is touched nevertheless to see the little betrothed bride taking her new

offices upon her so eagerly and gracefully, watching to see how she can supply his loss; and how she cannot believe he can do anything for himself, but must be utterly dependent upon her; and how he laughingly shows her how wonderfully he has learned to make one hand do the work of two; and how when the time comes to go home no one but herself must hold his overcoat for him, and help him on with it, and, ah! so tenderly and lovingly avoiding the wounded arm; and how he laughingly assures her that it only takes one hand to put on a hat at any rate; but she likes to do it, and he likes to receive her loving service; and how he assures her in the dark, beautiful walk home that she is better to him than a thousand arms, and the happiness of this one night surpasses all the happiness of his whole life; and how she cries when he tells her of his sufferings, not so much bodily as mental, when he lost his arm, and felt that it cut off the last hope of winning her; and all this aggravating his illness, his life was despaired of, and he wanted to die, but lived on in spite of the wish, and rose up from his bed so shattered and broken that no one could have known him. And then he told her of his sad journey, his arrival in Richmond, his going first to her own home, and then his following her to Mrs. Marshall's, and how all the resignation to his fate, he thought he had gained, fled when he saw her standing under the shadow of the Christmas-tree, with that radiant picture of manhood bending over her,

"Mr. Inskeep, poor Mr. Inskeep! How cruel in me to have forgotten him," said Mary. But she cannot talk of him even to Mr. Williams in this hour of her happiness. Her tenderness extends to the poor out-

cast from her heart, and she grieves over his sorrow, but silently; and thinks of him long after she retires, and tries to form some plan whereby she may help him to bear his disappointment; picks out a wife for him who is so much more attractive than herself, and she thinks that she is sure he must come into terms, and so she goes to sleep very happily, with a smile on her lip and a thanksgiving in her heart.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"And there was mounting in hot haste; the steed,
The mustering squadron, and the clattering car
Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,
And swiftly forming in the ranks of war;
And the deep thunder peal on peal afar,
And near the beat of the alarming drum,
Roused up the soldier ere the morning star,
While thronged the citizens with terror dumb,
Or whispering with white lips: The foe! they come! they come!"

BYRON.

SILENTLY yet surely the day was striding on, big with the fate of the Southern cause, while rocked in false security the people dreamed not of its approach. They stopped their ears to warning voices, and wilfully closed their eyes to the truth, and went on laughing and singing on the very brink of destruction; and when at last the blast sounded, it sounded the knell of hope and faith and happiness.

Never did the sun rise more brilliantly than upon the morning of the 2d of April 1865, and never did it shine upon a people more unconscious of the fate that day had in store for them.

It was the Sabbath, and the sound of the bells ringing out the "call to prayer," broke sweetly upon the stillness, and the people in glad obedience to the summons poured into the churches.

"What news?" asked one friend of another in a passing greeting.

"All quiet," was the answer; "not even 'Sunday rumors' this morning. The croakers look peaceful, and

were undisturbed by the shots along the lines a few hours since. I did see some stragglers looking at the bulletin board as I passed, but I did not stop."

"Ah!" answered the other, "officers of the Commissary Department say Richmond made a narrow escape a few weeks since; she was near being starved out. But all this stir has roused the people at last, and they have been crowding provisions into the city, and I was assured this morning by Captain H—— that we had not been so safe for months."

"Oh yes, it's very cheering," said his friend. "I never have had any doubt of our success, and I think the other side must be pretty well convinced that we never intend to give up. We have given them a specimen of our invincible determination."

And they passed on into the churches, and heard not the voices everywhere crying, "Blind! blind! blind!" for even now the messengers were speeding onward with the awakening tidings.

It was the Sabbath for the administration of the Holy Communion at St. Paul's Church, and President Davis went up with the rest of the people of God to lay his burden of care at the foot of the Cross; but before the time for that service arrived, a soft-footed messenger sought him out and handed him a note. He glanced at it, and had not the congregation been devoutly attentive to their religious duties they might have seen a sudden spasm cross his pale face, and with faltering steps he left the church.

The note was from General Lee, conveying the intelligence that Richmond was no longer tenable!

At the Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Dr. Hoge held the attention of his people in the strong grasp of his elo-

quence, so that they scarcely noted the summons which withdrew one member and another of the congregation from the church, first the Mayor of the city, then the Medical Director. The Rev. Doctor had finished his discourse and fervently commended his people to God, and was in the act of reading the closing hymn, when the sexton handed him a note. Thinking it was some notice to be read, he laid it beside him a moment while he finished the hymn, and then in the act of turning to his seat, opened it. In a second, before the choir had time to sound the first note of praise, he turned back again, and those who saw him then can never forget the change which that one moment had wrought. Winters of sorrow seemed to have rolled over his soul.

So terrific was the transition, that as his congregation caught his expression they arose as one man to their feet, and waited with suspended shriek upon their lips to hear their doom. It was delayed a moment while the minister struggled for utterance, and then the voice came shaking and quavering, and broken with the agony which overwhelmed him, and in the terrible silence they heard:

"My dear friends, I have just received news: news which wrings my heart for myself, for you, and for your children; news which makes it improbable that I will meet you in this house again for a long time. I thank you for your unfailing kindness and love, which have brightened my life. Farewell: go quietly to your homes, and remember amidst these waves of sorrow that your Father holds the helm." He then pronounced the benediction.

There is a grief which scorches the tear-drops ere they fall; and the great groan which burst from the

heart of that assembly of people was the only sound which demonstrated the agony of the moment. Faces were distorted, but the moisture which cools the brain was denied them. Friend grasped the hand of friend, as on the eve of a long parting, or a meeting where life's hopes lie dead; words were few and brief; comforters there were none, all were mourners. The men hurried out into the street to gain fuller intelligence, and the women, as if the fire already consumed their homes, hurried to their children.

No pen can describe the horror of the moment. In the streets all was confusion. Officers hurried to the different departments of the Government. The Banks were open, and depositors eagerly embraced the opportunity to withdraw their gold, while the Directors superintended the removal of the bullion. Wagons drove hurriedly up to the doors of the different offices, were loaded and driven off, while others took their places, to be loaded in their turn and follow on. Officers rode madly about the streets, giving orders. The female clerks stood sadly about the doors of their offices, or vented their feelings by giving energetic assistance in packing and burning the documents over which they had spent so many useless hours. Householders busily occupied themselves secreting their valuables, and preparing for the sacking of the city which every one predicted as certain; while the lower orders of people stood in squads about the streets, with lowering faces, watching the progress of events, and commenting thereon in low murmurs. So the day wore away, and night fell upon the grief-stricken city — a night whose horrors rarely have been surpassed. The evacuation by the army was fixed for eight o'clock, but it

extended through the night, and the wail of agony rose for the first time over the partings between friends who scarce expected to meet again on earth. Hundreds of the citizens determined to leave the city with the army, and all the vehicles were pressed into service or hired at a premium exceeding belief.

At eleven o'clock at night the train on the Danville road bore off the officials of the Government and their valuables, and all who could escaped in any way which presented itself.

But soon a more terrible master than the Federal Government ruled the city. Who gave the order for the firing of the Government tobacco-warehouses is not known; the recklessness of the people to consequences alone could have justified it, as they occupied a position in the heart of the city, and the fire spread with fearful rapidity. To add to the horror of the scene, a mob of men, women and children went wildly from place to place, breaking open warehouses and bearing off whatever fell in their way. Wishing to prevent them from getting hold of the liquor which was stored by the Government, orders were issued by the city officials to pour it into the streets. The gutters ran with it, and the mad flame rejoicing in the approach of this its kindred spirit, leaped to meet it, and soon, roaring, crackling, and dashing in blue, red, and yellow waves, the demon whirled down the streets, carrying destruction with it and driving the frightened crowd before it. At daybreak the city was shaken to its foundations by terrific explosions. It was the blowing-up of the rams Richmond, Virginia, Beaufort, and Number 2, the navy whose advent had been greeted with so much

hope. The scene presented at sunrise defies description. Soldiers crossed each other hurrying after the army or returning sullenly to their homes. Sometimes two would stop and talk earnestly; at one moment the eloquence of one would touch the waning honor in the breast of his comrade, or revive the dying love for the cause in his heart, and he would turn back and hurry on with him; at another the contrary would be the result, and fear, discouragement, or reluctance to leave his home would operate too powerfully upon the heretofore faithful soldier of the Confederacy. With a blush he would turn his back on the path of duty, and hanging his head, would seek his home, a dishonored man.

Hundreds and hundreds of men, women, and children poured up the street with the spoils of the night upon them. Here is a man with a roll of cotton on his shoulder; another with a box of shoes or of bacon on his back; next comes a woman rolling a barrel of flour before her, and a child with a basket almost too full for him to carry; and over it all the lurid smoke rolls in angry clouds, and the rising sun shines red through its obscurity; and far away speeds the fugitive army to its fate, bearing the last hopes of a suffering and distracted people.

As the day progressed the horrors increased. Fugitives from the burning buildings, who had only escaped with their lives, filled the streets, now their only home. The fire had progressed fearfully, and some individual in reckless or devilish mood had cut the hose, and help was impossible had there been any to give it; but no one seemed to heed this pitiless foe while looking for another whom they feared still

more. At length a succession of explosions like a heavy bombardment broke upon the startled ears of the people. Was the dreaded enemy upon them? and was this the beginning of his vengeance? No! it was the Arsenal, which was fast consuming with its murderous shot and shell, which, not to be balked of the object for which they had been made, wreaked themselves upon the helpless dying city, and fired into the fire itself in a vain effort at revenge.

And as if the culmination of horrors was even yet to come, a new cry broke out which sent the blood shivering back to the heart. It was the eruption of the convicts from the Penitentiary; and they came leaping and shouting with their parti-colored clothes, shorn heads, and diabolical countenances, where murder, robbery, and rapine were stamped in fearful characters. They were about four hundred in all, who had overcome their diminished guard, set fire to the building and escaped when there was no one to recapture them. Many a heart which had kept its courage up to this point died away at the sight; but fortunately they were too intent upon securing their new-gained liberty to attempt new crimes, and no immediate evils followed their appearance. At about ten o'clock in the morning the cry, "The Yankees! the Yankees!" startled all with new fears as the crowds fled up the streets with frightened faces.

But what had been apprehended as the greatest evil of all, proved in the end a blessing, as it brought an element into the storm of disorder and misrule which in some degree quelled it. So far from committing deeds of violence, the first act of the Federal force was an organised steady exertion to subdue the fire and re-

store order; and by night the flames began to succumb to their efforts, and the fire sank down exhausted, but glowing with smouldering rage which only watched an opportunity to break out again with renewed violence.

The scene of desolation was fearful to witness. It presented masses of ruined, blackened walls, with the fire still burning in their midst; suggesting to the imagination no inapt similitude to the heart of the nation, which now existed, a ruin pitiable to behold, with the smouldering fires of disappointment and bitterness glowing in the midst.

The fire had extended for miles, consuming everything which came in its way. The streets were mere piles of rubbish; all marks were lost whereby the pedestrian could conjecture his position, except the calm waters of the James, which rolled itself as quietly and peacefully along as if no such waves as war and violence had ever ruffled the surface of time.

The Capitol Square presented a strange, sad picture; the fire had consumed everything consumable around three sides of its lower area, and the old Capitol stood alone, as it were in the midst of an island against the shores of which the waves of ruin beat.

Upon the green grass of the square sat, lay, or stood hundreds upon hundreds of human beings of all ages, sexes, and ranks of life, in various attitudes of despondency. They were the homeless outcasts of the fire; and above them waved and flapped the United States flag, the token of their defeat and humiliation, and around them the negro soldiers and the negroes of the city exulted and shouted over the triumphs of the day.

The destitution in the city was fearful; all of the lower

part of it having been consumed, and with it such provisions as it contained. Numbers had escaped from their burning homes with only their lives, and the fact that the only money the mass of the people possessed was the Confederate currency, reduced all classes alike to absolute want.

Capt. Holcombe had been obliged to leave with the army, but his mind was comparatively easy upon the subject of his family, as the Commissary Department, to whose office Mary belonged, issued orders that provisions sufficient for the subsistence of a family for several months should be sent to each one of their female clerks, together with six boxes of tobacco, which in itself would have been as good as gold to them. And fortunately for Mr. Holcombe's peace of mind, he did not know that these orders never were filled. The mob and the fire together consumed the entire stock of Government provisions, and the poor women who had depended upon them were left perfectly destitute. Their residence was not in the burnt district of the city, so that they were better off than many of their friends in that they still had a roof over their heads, but in that alone; for the day after the departure of the army, Mrs. Holcombe, Mary, and little Eddy, together with the two old servants, were reduced to a half of a loaf of bread, and with no hope of relief beyond it.

"Ah, Mammy," said Mrs. Holcombe, as she looked at the pale faces of her children, "what are we to do? I went out this morning and found my money was worth nothing, and when this is gone I do not see what is to become of us."

Mammy groaned aloud, and after a few moments' thought she said:

"My Misstis, God knows I could lay down and die radder den see my old marster's childern wid nothin' to eat. Oh ef he could raise his head, what would he think! But ef you will all keep right quiet, Bob en' me will go to dese people; dey say dey likes black folks better'n white, en' dey is done dressed sum of 'em up in rigimintals, like a passel of monkeys for all de world; but maybe me en' Bob can git you somethin' to eat."

Mrs. Holcombe made no remonstrance, but saw the two old people start out with a basket with very little hope of their success.

In about two hours they returned exultant.

"We went," says Mammy, "to the Fiddil Gineral, en' I told him dit I had a house full of childern who was starvin'— may de good Lord forgive de lie I told! — en' would he be so good es to give me sumfin for 'em to eat. He axed me en' Bob sum questions, but we nuvver said *white* onced; en' he sont us down to another man, en' he sont us down to another, en' he sont us down to another yit, tell dey was six on 'em, en' he give us dis meat en' meal, which ain't fitten for nothin' but niggers, en' to keep white ladies from starvin'."

Mrs. Holcombe bent over the basket, into which her tears fell plentifully as she looked thankfully at the coarse pickled pork and corn-meal, which would keep hunger away a little longer from their household, while Mary threw her arms around Mammy and sobbed as if her heart would break.

After a day or two, the Federal commandant of the post, recognising the necessity for taking some steps to remove this terrible destitution, appointed officers who went around to each house in the city and issued

rations to all alike. Some idea may be gathered of the condition of things from the report of the Secretary of the Relief Committee, who from the 8th of April to the 15th issued eighty-six thousand five hundred and fifty-five rations! A terrible picture is thus presented, as thousands had fled from the city, and at least one-third of the remaining population must have subsisted upon the rations issued by their captors.

The other two families for whom our story claims an interest were reduced to like straits, but it is not worth while to harrow the feelings of our readers by relating them.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Hope for a season bade the world farewell,
And Freedom shrieked when Kosciusco fell."— CAMPBELL.

ONE week passed over the people of Richmond,— a week in which hope still lived, and served to sustain them under the anxieties they suffered, not only for themselves, but for their absent friends, about whom they could hear nothing reliable.

It was the Sunday after the evacuation; the suffering people had most of them gone forth as usual to the churches, some as a matter of habit, some from curiosity, and others with a desire to obtain comfort in the house of God which was denied them in their closets; but it cannot be denied that the most melancholy feature of the then present feeling in the South was a tendency to infidelity, or at least skepticism: They had so long clung with undoubting confidence to the help of God, founded upon the righteousness of their cause, that the mind could not at once recover; it was at sea in a storm without rudder or sail, grasping for the help which did not come; and in the despair which ensued, doubt took possession of it, and a sullen distrust even of its Maker.

No army could have behaved better under the circumstances than did the United States army. They not only committed no depredations, but they kept aloof from the people, recognising at once the bitterness of feeling which must have way. So in the churches they sat off by themselves, instead of mingling

with them. Very little allusion was made from the pulpits to the condition of affairs; indeed it had been forbidden so far as prayers for the Confederacy was concerned; but no order could govern the nation's heart, and many an anguished supplication ascended to heaven from those altars for the little band of fugitives whose cause was even then beyond the reach of prayer.

One old Baptist minister prayed:

"O Lord, thou who seest our hearts, knowest what we so earnestly desire, but dare not specify in words, Grant it, O Lord, grant it!"

About eight o'clock at night the tense nerves of the people vibrated painfully at the sound of a gun, and before its echoes died away another followed, and another and another, until sixty were counted. It was a salute to celebrate some triumph. What could it be? They dared not think. At last the suspense grew too horrible to be borne; even certainty could be no worse.

Ellen Randolph, opening her window and seeing a Federal soldier passing by, called out:

"Can you tell me the meaning of those guns?"

"What say?" said the man, approaching the window.

"Can you tell me the meaning of those guns?" repeated the young lady, tremulously.

"Yes, ma'am, them guns is fired to celebrate the surrender of General Lee's army."

He heard something like a gurgling, choking sound as the figure disappeared from the window. It was the dying gasp of hope in the young heart.

After some days the disbanded soldiers of the dead cause began to flock back to the city, with bowed

heads and bleeding hearts. They told with eloquence which alone is the offspring of true feeling, of the last hour of the life of the Army of Northern Virginia; of the hardships of the march, when the expected rations failed to reach them, and how the soldiers were obliged to scatter in order to get food to save them from starvation. How they lived for days on raw corn and even roots, but still the thought of surrender was far from them; and how when the hour for meeting the enemy arrived, and they were rushing on to the conflict, suddenly the field seemed to be alive with white flags, and their old warrior General riding into their midst, the tears streaming down his cheeks, said:

"I have done what I could for you; I can do no more."

Then hardy soldiers fell down in his pathway, and were not ashamed of their tears; and the officers seeing the terrible suffering of the Commander-in-Chief, who must take the responsibility of action, showed their love for him by striving to share it, and many a strong man bowed his head over the hand of the noble old soldier in deeper reverence and love than in the days of his greatest triumphs.

In a few days General Lee returned to the city, and his friends flocked around him to testify their love and sympathy; and truly he was grander in the moment of defeat than he had ever been at the head of his conquering armies; and never had he been so entirely the leader of the Southern people, whom he swayed by his moderation and wisdom into like action.

In the delirium of the moment thousands would have sought foreign homes, talked wildly of Brazil and Mexico. But he ever advised all to remain and accept

the situation which was inevitable, and do their duty as became good, honorable men, hoping for better times in the future. For himself he nobly refused wealth and honors, preferring to set the people who so loved him the example of a life made noble by misfortune, and of a greatness which could know no fall.

Choosing for his profession in life the simple duties of an instructor of youth, he led young men into the battle of life, and showed himself the great General in instructing them how to overcome its difficulties and perils by a dependence upon the Captain of their salvation. And here in his home among the hoary hills of his native State, beside the grave of his former comrade, he found the happiness he sought in the paths of duty; and when at last he laid his honored head down to rest, the people whom he had served so faithfully mourned him as a father, and wept again as for the second loss of the cause of the South.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"By this time, like one who has set out on his way by night, and travelled through a region of smooth and idle dreams, our history now arrives on the confines when daylight and truth meet us with a clear dawn, representing to our view true colors and shapes."—MILTON.

READER, the time has come for us to part; but before doing so, I would present to your mental vision two brief scenes, in which, together, we take our final leave of "The Holcombes."

SCENE I.

Several months have elapsed since the close of the war, and Richmond is but beginning to breathe again after the long paralysis which succeeded its final scenes. It is true that sickly odors are still ascending from the ruins, and where the foundations of the houses were dug deepest a sullen cloud of smoke still rises from the smouldering fires, which continue with strange pertinacity to live on without food to sustain them. But notwithstanding, Richmond's wounds are being patched up, and people begin to talk hopefully of her recovery. Her streets are clearing of their piles of rubbish, and here and there workmen, who have doffed the gray for the mason's leather apron, are repairing the waste places and rebuilding the ruined walls; and to supply the lack of buildings for business purposes, booths are opened and merchandise carried on under canvas within the ruins themselves. The disbanded soldiers have returned to their homes and to the walks of private life, and sadly but with determin-

ation are putting their shoulders to the wheel of fortune, which turns but slowly upon the rugged road they have to travel. The highways are open and travel resumed under restrictions. The exiles are beginning to return, and surely but slowly is the pulse of the nation beginning to throb, and its great heart to beat regularly and naturally, though its wounds are still festering and the blood flowing from every pore.

The new passenger-boat upon the James river has just arrived from Norfolk; and as the travellers crowd the plank which affords a passage to the landing, we press forward to welcome familiar faces, a lady and a gentleman — he a strong, broad-shouldered, rugged Saxon, and she matching him well in her noble height and queenly carriage, her youthful face bearing the indelible stamp of past sorrow, which while plowing its furrow deep into the heart and placing its sign-manual upon the broad brow, has left a chastened light upon the whole visage, softening the lofty pride of her style of beauty and illuminating it with a tender grace which uninterrupted happiness could never have bestowed. Behind this couple is a plain, neat elderly woman, bearing carefully in her arms a large bundle, about the safe conduct of which both the lady and gentleman manifest considerable anxiety.

A carriage is called, the party enter, and are whirled away up the street, but not too swiftly for us to follow, we see them stop at the door of a cottage-dwelling in the suburbs of the city. We see the lady look anxiously out, and there are tears in her eyes. As the door is opened there is a sound of joy within the house, and the party hardly reach the pavement before a young golden-haired girl rushes out and flies to the arms of the lady, crying:

"Margie! Margie!"

She is followed by a gentleman who moves with some difficulty, by reason of a wooden leg which supplies a lost limb; a gentle, lovely lady, a young bearded man with a scarred face, an older man with an empty coat-sleeve, and two feeble old negroes, a man and a woman.

The travellers are almost borne into the house in the arms of their friends; and we still follow on.

We see Margaret Murray with her arm around her step-mother. She forces her gently on and places her in an arm-chair, and kneeling before her, takes from the woman who follows the mysterious bundle, which she places upon her knees, and together the two women proceed to examine its contents, while the rest of the company stand by and look on. It takes some time to reach the heart of this bundle, by reason of the multitudinous wraps; but it is accomplished at last, and exclamations of delight sound through the room as a fair sleeping baby of about three months old is presented to view, and the young mother, first stooping down and kissing her treasure, puts her arms about the older lady's neck as she says with a face all aglow with feeling:

"Mamma, I have called her Jean Holcombe; my little Jean Holcombe Murray."

"Oh, Margie," said Jean, the blush rising to her cheek, "your own mother dear."

"No, Mamma," said Margaret, with increased earnestness, "my own mother, if she can see from her home in heaven, knows I am right and approves. And oh, Mamma," kissing her and speaking tremulously, "if my baby's name only tells you in plain enough

language what I wish to say, that you have been the great blessing of my life; that when I look back and recall all of the sad waywardness of my childhood and youth; when I remember with *such* regret all the sorrow and worry I must have been to you in those early days, and that in all that time my memory does not bring up one harsh or unkind word; that through it all you met waywardness with sweet forbearance, and indifference, and even dislike, with unfailing and unwavering affection; and when I think of a later time — oh, Mamma, *that* later time!" and she kisses her with tears now —" when sorrow came upon me, and your dear breast was the pillow for my head, and your dear heart the resting-place for my woes — when I think of all this, I feel as if I wanted some way in which to testify my sense of it all. Let my baby bear your name, Mamma, my little Jean Holcombe Murray! I love to call her so, and whenever I do, I pray to God that she may grow up to be a blessing and a treasure to all with whom she comes in contact as you have been."

Scene II.

It is two years since the close of the war, and the town of Winchester has recovered considerably from its dilapidation, and has resumed its old quiet, staid appearance so completely that it is hard to realise that it has ever been the theatre of the stirring events we have detailed in the progress of this story. The legend of the Shawnee Spring would seem to have some truth in it, as all of the old inhabitants have been drawn back to the town, many of them despoiled of their homes, most of them poverty-stricken and care-

worn, taking up the burden of life upon their old camp-ground, fighting fortune upon their old battle-field.

But in the midst of their struggles for the necessaries of existence, the cause they so loved is not forgotten. They often revert to it with moist eyes and shaking voices; but they have learned to kiss the rod which smote them, and to bow in submission before the unseen purposes of Him who sees the end from the beginning.

Remembering that a cause lost is a cause condemned, and unwilling that the children of those who had surrendered everything, and life itself, for a principle of right, should adopt the verdict of the world, the women of Winchester determined to collect together the bones of the slaughtered martyrs of the Valley, and place them in consecrated ground; and that they would establish it as a custom to be observed to all future generations, that on a certain day, year after year, they would repair as mourners to the spot and decorate these honored graves with flowers; and so the children coming to years of observation, and receiving from the failing hands of their parents this obligation as a sacred trust, the Lost Cause, and the graves of those who fell in it, would always retain their places in the hearts of the Southern people.*

So they organised themselves into a committee, and help came in to them from all quarters. Every Southern State sent in her contribution, for every Southern State had her personal interest in the enterprise. A beautiful spot was chosen, overlooking the town, and every one took his part in the labor of love; the men gave their strength, and the women devised and executed;

*This custom had its birth in Winchester, though now it extends through the South.

and the Valley at the pious call rendered up the precious dust of these her sons, and it was laid to rest beneath the sod over which they had so often charged to battle, and which had been wet with their blood.

The ground was tastefully laid out in a separate division for each State, which was designated by a white column with its name upon it; and around lay the dead in ranks as they had marched to battle, and each grave distinguished by a simple headstone, bearing the name, regiment, and date of death of the deceased.

In the centre of the ground rises a mound, marked as the other divisions by a white column, upon which is inscribed:

"815 unknown and unrecorded dead lie beneath this mound."

A sad, sad epitaph! But thanks be to God, He knoweth them that are His, and their souls are precious in His sight!

It is the 6th of June, the day chosen for the decoration of the graves and the dedication of the new cemetery, which they have named "Stonewall," in honor of the hero whose name will be the watchword of the people of the Valley so long as memory lives or history records his virtues and his achievements.

From an early hour in the morning of this marked day the roads leading to the town are alive with vehicles loaded with flowers, or persons on horseback and on foot bearing their many-hued burdens. Never was there a more triumphant assertion of the universal love of the people for the cause, than in this outpouring of the population to do honor to its memory. They flocked in from fifty miles around. Wherever

the news of the enterprise had reached, the streets were crowded with them, and around the cemetery itself hundreds of vehicles stood, serving as seats for the waiting multitude. At ten o'clock a procession was formed upon one of the streets of the town, consisting first of the surviving members of the Stonewall Brigade and the citizens of the town, and then of the women, marching two and two with downcast faces and tearful eyes, each with her offering of flowers in her hands. It was estimated that there were about five thousand in the procession. It was the funeral of the Confederacy!

Onward the long line moved through the streets where the living army had so often marched. On, on — until at last the cemetery was reached, and there the procession separated, and the women tearfully and sadly laid their burdens down. No grave was neglected, each was honored as the resting-place of a brother; and as a familiar name would catch the vision of one, a flower and a tear would drop together on the mound.

It was a simple testimonial, touchingly beautiful even to those who had no especial interest in it; but when connected with the memory of the past, there were a pathos and a beauty in it which the eloquence of the tear alone can describe.

We recognise many familiar faces in the crowd. There is Mrs. Mason laying a flower upon a grave as she murmurs:

"Poor Charlie!"

There is Mary with her April face, the book of whose maiden life has been closed for more than a year, leaning upon the arm of her husband. There are Captain

and Mrs. Holcombe, Mr. and Mrs. Randolph, Ellen and Mr. Hautman, and Colonel Murray and Margaret; the latter guides the tottering footsteps of a fair, flaxen-haired little girl. As they reach the graves, she stoops down, and simplifying her language to suit the comprehension of the baby mind, tells her to put her "pretty rose" on the grave of the dear Southern soldier who died for "Papa and Mamma and little Jean;" and the baby, not fully comprehending this great mystery of death, which has puzzled older and wiser heads than hers, but seeing her mother's tearful face, and recognising in it something solemn and sad, which, child-like, she connects with her simple daily prayers, takes the office in trust from "Mamma," and lays her flower down as she says, while a pretty seriousness obscures the dimples upon her face:

"Poor sojer! die for Papa and Mamma and Baby Jean, for Jedus' sake, Amen."

Reader, my task is done! The spirits I have raised abandon me; and as they vanish in the mist of the future, I eagerly strive to pierce the distance, and follow the forms of those who have stood as the representatives of my ideas in these pages. I see them going down the pathway of life calmly and quietly, seeking happiness in "homely joys and destinies obscure." I see their patriotism living more in the past than the present; though the rainbow of hope begins faintly to span the horizon as the clouds break away and the sun shines upon the quiet graves. And looking farther into the mist, "methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong

man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks. Methinks I see her as an eagle renewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam."

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